

Theological Education

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ISSUE FOCUS

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Diane Kennedy



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Volume 45, Number 2
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Editor's Introduction iii
Stephen R. Graham

**The Social Construction of Curriculum and Pedagogy:
A Response to Dirk Felleman** v
Timothy D. Lincoln

ISSUE FOCUS

Women in Leadership

**Three Coins in the Fountain: Female Leadership
in Theological Education** 1
Barbara Brown Zikmund

**Response to Personal Realities: Who is she? How did she get there?
What does she think? How does she cope?** 61
Sharon Henderson Callahan

**Better than Gold: Reflections on Section Two:
Professional Relationships and Institutional Factors** 69
Sandra Beardsall

Systemic Challenges: One Dean's Response 75
Anne B. Yardley

A Tragedy of Women's Leadership in Theological Education 81
Michelle Sungshin Lim

Women in Leadership in North American Theological Education 85
Eleanor Moody Shepherd

Women and Men in Leadership in Theological Education 87
Barbara G. Wheeler and Sharon L. Miller

Women's Well-Being in Seminary: A Qualitative Study 99
Mary L. Jensen, Mary Sanders, and Steven J. Sandage

Leadership Success Strategies for Women 117
Diane Kennedy

Continuing the Conversation

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Editor's Introduction

Stephen R. Graham

This issue represents the culmination of a project studying the leadership roles of women in ATS institutions. Women in Leadership in theological education has been an area of work for The Association of Theological Schools since 1997 and a particular focus since 2000. In 2005, ATS received a grant from the Carpenter Foundation for an in-depth study of women's leadership in theological education. Completed in 2009, the study focused on women who hold senior leadership positions in ATS member schools, specifically chief executive officers and chief academic officers. The research was "designed to produce insights to guide the future work of ATS in its efforts to support the professional development of women in theological education, enhance the capacity of theological schools to utilize the gifts and abilities of women faculty and administrators, and inform educational programs for women students."¹

The Association offers its thanks to members of the ATS Women in Leadership Advisory Committee who conducted structured telephone interviews with fifty-nine past and present chief administrative and chief academic officers from approximately fifty-six schools. These interviews provided an unprecedented look at the experiences and perspectives of women in administrative leadership positions in a variety of institutions. As the report to the 2010 Biennial Meeting put it, the project "will provide ATS schools with resources and information to help them become more effective employers of women, benefit from women's leadership, enhance the satisfaction of women administrators and faculty, and provide critical information to strengthen the theological education of female students."²

In addition to presentations at various ATS leadership events, this publication will share the findings of the project and some critical reflections upon them. Barbara Brown Zikmund's summary of the research project is shaped around the three themes of "personal realities," "professional relationships and institutional factors," and "systemic challenges." Her work with the data presents a fascinating picture of both the variety of circumstances and the common challenges facing women in those roles. We are all indebted to this pioneer theological educator for her comprehensive work and distinctive insights.

Five female leaders respond with brief essays, giving their reflections on the research project. These reflections both affirm and challenge the research findings and interpretations. From her perspective as the only Catholic laywoman serving as either CEO or CAO in an accredited ATS institution, Sharon Henderson Callahan notes the loneliness of that circumstance but also celebrates the large numbers of women being trained as lay ecclesial ministers and also many women in graduate theological studies heading toward service within the Catholic Church. Sandra Beardsall, a professor and minister in the United Church of Canada, speaks of the "splash" that women make as "the first woman to . . .," eventually settling into an equilibrium characterized by more ordinary tasks as well as the qualities of courage and resilience. From

her perspective as academic dean in a mainline Protestant university divinity school, Anne B. Yardley notes the significant differences between the institutions served by women within the Association (mainline Protestant, evangelical Protestant, and Roman Catholic) and the important distinctions to be made between the work of CEOs and CAOs. Michelle Sungshin Lim notes her surprise and dismay at the very small numbers of women of color in leadership positions in ATS schools and calls for a thoroughgoing “deconstruction of patriarchic governance” as a necessary step toward opening possibilities for the leadership of women. And Eleanor Moody Shepherd remarks on the absence of conflict in the report, particularly given the struggles of African American female senior administrators like herself.

Barbara G. Wheeler and Sharon L. Miller of the Auburn Center for the Study of Theological Education present the Center’s concurrent study on “Women and Men in Leadership in Theological Education” and conclude that, while female presidents and deans reveal many similarities to their male counterparts, they *do differ* in significant ways. The study surveyed all chief executive and chief academic officers of ATS institutions, and we are grateful to the Auburn Center for its permission to publish the results.

Changing the focus a bit, a team of scholars from Bethel Seminary share their research on female students at their school. They identify key factors that have affected the experience of female students and alumnae from Bethel and offer a series of recommended practices that they believe will enhance the experience of women in seminaries across the Association.

Finally, we are pleased to publish the opening plenary presentation from the October 2010 Women in Leadership Conference by Diane Kennedy, who has served for thirty-five years in congregational and theological school leadership, both at ATS institutions and within the Association itself.

We hope this issue will both serve as a milepost for work that has been done and progress made and as a challenge and inspiration for future work as the leadership gifts of women become increasingly prominent within the community of theological schools.

ENDNOTES

1. Barbara Brown Zikmund, “Report on Women in Leadership in Theological Education,” *Program and Reports*, 47th Biennial Meeting (Pittsburgh, PA: The Association of Theological Schools, 2010), 134.
2. *Ibid.*, 135.

Continuing the Conversation

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The Social Construction of Curriculum and Pedagogy: A Response to Dirk Felleman

Dirk Felleman's "Mastery or Foundation" (*Theological Education* 45, no. 1) cogently pointed to the complexity of theological education that trains persons for leadership in religious organizations and to changes in thinking about education (post John Bright) that should, in his view, help shape conversations about theological education in our time. Since the establishment of theological seminaries, education for ministerial practice has lived in the Brightian tension among various strands of competence required for training pastors, such as Christian piety, academic knowledge, and professional skills.

Felleman suggests that theological seminaries have been slow to digest the results of educational research (e.g., Donald Schön), which point out ways to train persons for the practical wisdom that pastors need. I think he is correct in this assessment. Some of the reasons for theological education's tardiness, in my view, lies in the conservatism that constantly accompanies the bureaucratization of any field. Weber noted this a hundred years ago. We see similar effects in organizations as diverse as state government agencies, child-care centers, and freestanding seminaries. Theological schools are

conservative in this sense as a side effect of being bureaucratized organizations. A second reason for this conservatism is the church's explicit commitment to cherishing traditions that accompany the proclamation of God's love through Jesus Christ. As schools of the church, theological seminaries are rightfully hesitant to make changes that might betray core theological values. A downside of this commitment to Christian tradition is that seminary faculties have serious discussions about whether the use of a projection screen in chapel or offering online courses in the MDiv program is inconsistent with that denomination's tradition. Perhaps I am a hopeless modernist, but I find the Bible, the mothers and fathers of the Church, and my own confessional tradition mute about many of these divisive issues. Faculties make decisions about using technology or implementing other novelties primarily on nontheological grounds.

Felleman wants theological schools to decide to "consciously change our ways of educating seminarians so that they are better equipped" (viii) to minister. The question facing theological educators is not the either/or question about seminary as a foundation for ministry (to be supplemented by experience or apprenticeships provided by the churches) versus seminary as providing mastery for ministry. In my view,

the questions that boards of trustees, administrators, and faculty members should address are messy, pragmatic questions. For example, the large Carnegie study of clerical education, *Educating Clergy: Teaching Practices and Pastoral Imagination* (Jossey-Bass, 2006), found that one way of discerning the characteristic timbre of a given school's curriculum was to look at the relative mix of formational, academic, and praxis elements. Discussions about this mix quickly get to limiting factors (e.g., what can be accomplished in a three-year degree) and require reflection on what is most pressing for a seminary to provide its graduates, given its particular mission, values, and resources.

My own thinking about a seminary's curriculum has been influenced by John Searle and Martin Luther. Searle, in *The Construction of Social Reality* (Free Press, 1995), argues that powerful institutional facts are sustained almost entirely by consensus. A twenty-dollar bill functions as currency because the dry cleaners and other merchants accept it as money. When the consensus crumbles, it's not money any more. Marriage is marriage the way it is in Iowa (but not Texas) because both the law and the people behave in such a way that the majority knows what counts as mar-

riage. Luther repeatedly pointed out that Christians have wide areas of life in which evangelical liberty allows freedom for service without specifying a blueprint for that service. What does this mean for curriculum? A school's curriculum is not the product of an inevitable geological process. It is the product of countless small decisions to which a broad majority in a microculture assents. In other words, a curriculum is the result of human activity, not a consequence produced by the forces of nature.

The kind of seminary curriculum and pedagogy that Felleman and others want is certainly allowed by ATS standards. What is required for the renewal of theological education that Felleman calls for is the willingness to combine evangelical liberty, imagination, the results of educational research, and the changing needs of churches to change patterns of instruction so that students begin the path to wise and faithful ministry. The leadership challenge for boards and administrators is to persuade faculty members that the benefit of changing their curriculum and pedagogy is worth the pain.

Timothy D. Lincoln is associate dean for seminary effectiveness at Austin Presbyterian Theological Seminary.

Three Coins in the Fountain: Female Leadership in Theological Education

Barbara Brown Zikmund

Women in Leadership Research Project Director

The 1954 movie *Three Coins in a Fountain* tells the story of three American girls looking for romance in Rome while employed at the American Embassy. It's about women; it's about tradition (in an ancient city filled with tradition); it's about deep commitment (love); and it's about wishing and hoping. Frank Sinatra made it famous:

Three coins in a fountain,
Each one seeking happiness.
Thrown by three hopeful lovers,
Which one will the fountain bless?

Three hearts in a fountain,
Each heart longing for its home.
There they lie in the fountain,
Somewhere in the heart of Rome.

Which one will the fountain bless?
Which one will the fountain bless?

The lyrics go on to celebrate the beauty of the ripples in the fountain and to articulate the wish—the hope—“make it mine, make it mine.”¹

Metaphorically these images point to the story of women who are top administrators in theological education—women who have been touched by God's spirit and filled with hope. These women are Christians with a wide range of theologies, but they share common concerns and care for theological education. They are seeking affirmation (even love) in the midst of tradition. These women wonder how they can give of their talents and how they can find various blessings. They articulate their wish in many ways, “make it mine, make it mine.”

I do not want to push this metaphor too far, but it was used to organize interview questions, and I will use it to shape this report. Three sets of questions emerge from the research related to top female administrators in member schools in The Association of Theological Schools in the United States and Canada (ATS).

- What personal issues and realities surround women administrators in theological education?
- How do professional relationships and institutional factors shape women administrators?

- And finally, although administrators in theological education are rooted in particular schools and traditions, they are also part of the larger systemic framework of theological education. What theological framework is needed? What can these women tell us about the health of our vocation and the systems within ATS? Do these women provide clues to a healthier future for theological education? What should ATS do to enable women in leadership to thrive and thereby enrich theological education?²

INTRODUCTION

In 1991, as one of the few women who had served for ten years as a chief academic officer (CAO) at one ATS member school and had recently become chief executive officer (CEO) at another, I was asked to write a short article for *Theological Education*.³ At that time there were six female CEOs and fifteen female CAOs in 210 member schools. Five years later in 1996, ATS had 225 member schools led by seven female CEOs and twenty female CAOs. Another five years after that in 2001, there were 244 member schools with eleven female CEOs and twenty-nine female CAOs. The number of schools grew more than 8 percent during the five-year period 1996–2001, and during that time the number of females in the top senior positions increased 48 percent. In November 2007 when the ATS Women in Leadership Advisory Committee launched a research project to learn more about female CEOs and CAOs, 252 member schools employed twenty-one female CEOs and forty-two female CAOs. (See Table 1.)

Table 1 Women in leadership in theological education, 1991–2007

	Schools	CEOs		CAOs		Total
1991	210	6	2.8%	15	7.1%	21
1996	225	7	3.1%	20	8.8%	27
2001	244	11	4.5%	29	11.8%	40
2007	252	21	8.3%	42	16.6%	63

The primary goals of this research project are to enable the Association to learn more about top female leaders in theological education so it can improve its support of female CEOs and CAOs who are already in ATS schools and to help member schools and the task of theological education benefit more directly from women’s leadership in the years to come. This research does not explore women in leadership in all ATS member schools; it touches only fifty-six schools out of the 252 member schools—the 22 percent that had female CEOs or CAOs in November 2007. We ask: Why are they there? How did they get there? How are they doing? The underlying bias of this research is an assumption that increasing the number of female top administrators in the ATS membership is a good idea and a worthy goal.

Background

Historians often note that, during the colonial period, settlers in North America repeatedly rejected gendered European traditions. Women's lives in colonial North America were different. They were shaped by practical arrangements suited to their new context. By the early nineteenth century, white Protestants, who dominated North American society, articulated a distinctive way of defining a woman's role and explained the special relationship between women and religion—scholars have called it “the cult of true womanhood,” or the “cult of domesticity.”

This view of gender asserts that God gives women a “peculiar susceptibility” to religion. Four cardinal virtues found in women (religious piety, purity, submissiveness, and domesticity) are sources of women's strength. Women are naturally “chosen vessels” for religious values. Whereas men have to work in the public sphere and be involved in the dirty world, women can focus upon preserving Christian values in the home. Women look to men to keep them safe so that they can do God's work to strengthen family and uphold society, and men need women for their salvation. When women questioned this arrangement or sought a “wider sphere of interest,” they were condemned.⁴

We all know the story of the Women's Rights Convention in 1848 in Seneca Falls, New York, and the long struggle for women's suffrage—gained in Canada in 1918 and in the United States in 1921. Winning the right to vote, however, did not dramatically change traditional attitudes about gender roles. During the 1920s, conservative Christians reinforced the cult of domesticity by emphasizing the biblical arguments behind a woman's primary obligation to her family. Economic pressures kept women at home during the Great Depression, further strengthening the importance of domesticity. Although immigrant, black, and lower-class women remained and grew as part of the labor market, this ideology around “women's sphere” persisted. By the 1950s, although many middle-class white married women had jobs outside the home to earn extra money to make life more comfortable and secure for their families, social attitudes about a woman's role continued to focus upon being a good wife and mother. Finally in the early 1960s, women of diverse races, classes, and religions began to challenge many of the prevailing assumptions behind gender roles in North American society. At first feminism was a “white” phenomenon, but soon thereafter African American and Hispanic women expanded the conversations to produce “womanist” and “mujerista” theologies.

It is difficult to explain exactly why concern about a woman's place in society—later labeled “second-wave feminism”—exploded in the late 1960s, but three factors are usually mentioned. First, by the mid-twentieth century, medical advancements were allowing women to live longer, independent, and healthier lives. Instead of spending most of their adult years pregnant or caring for children, women could anticipate thirty years of mature adult life after their child-rearing responsibilities were over. Second, during World War II, women convinced themselves and proved to others that they could be effective workers in the marketplace. Women in all classes and races became

more aware that many policies and practices in church and society were unfair and discriminatory. Third, government attention to the situation of women increased. In 1960, US President John F. Kennedy appointed Eleanor Roosevelt chair of the President's Commission on the Status of Women. The commission's 1963 report argued that women needed more protection under the law. Soon thereafter the Civil Rights Act of 1964 gave women legal leverage to challenge gender injustices through the courts by prohibiting all discrimination on the basis of both race and sex.⁵ A Royal Commission on the Status of Women in Canada was established on February 16, 1967. That Commission was mandated to inquire into and report upon the status of women in Canada and to recommend what steps might be taken by the federal government to ensure equal opportunities for women in all aspects of Canadian society.⁶

After 1970, ATS (then AATS, the American Association of Theological Schools) became newly sensitized to issues surrounding women and theological education and subsequently produced a special issue of *Theological Education* in 1972 that looked more deeply at the subject.⁷ In that special issue, Beverly Harrison, professor at Union Theological Seminary in New York City, notes two temptations—two dangers embedded in exploring the future of women and theological education. First, she suggests that there is a danger that both the advocates for change and the keepers of tradition will overestimate what is possible—"our estimates of ourselves need to be modest. . . . we need to concede that, whatever our adversaries feel, the wider inclusion of women in theological education does not, *per se*, portend anything like the earthquake which the emotional valence of their discussions imply."⁸ And second, those seeking change must wrestle with the "ethos-threat" they are posing. It can lead to exhaustion and frustration, draining away energy that is needed to conceptualize alternatives. "The question which we advocates of women's greater role in theological education need to face, with the remnants of our tattered energies," she writes, "is what it is we wish from serious inclusion in theological education. What are *our* questions, what are the issues which need to be broached in fresh ways?"⁹

In 1975 another full issue of *Theological Education* was devoted to women in theological education. Jesse Ziegler, editor and ATS executive director, writes: "We are aware that ATS may be on sensitive ground in discussing the professional leadership of churches related to our member schools, but clearly we cannot refrain from such discussion in the cause of equity, justice, and quality of education for ministry."¹⁰

ATS established the Committee on Women in Theological Education, and its report to the ATS Executive Committee in December 1977 outlined efforts to follow up on some of the points listed in the "Goals and Guidelines for Women in Theological Education" policy statement that had been adopted at the 1976 Biennial Meeting. It reported four things: (1) that a questionnaire would be sent in January 1978 to gather information about how schools "are moving forward in their inclusion of women at all levels of participation"; (2) that a list of approximately thirty consultants with skills related to women and education would soon be available to member schools; (3) that a three-year-old Doctoral Placement Service funded by a small grant from the Ford

Foundation needed to be continued; and (4) that it wished to propose changes in the accrediting standards.”¹¹

Although suggested changes to the standards of accreditation were never adopted, a proposed new sentence (in italics) in the first paragraph of the preamble to the standards is revealing:

These standards are written in a time of great uncertainty and change, with new modes of thought and action surfacing each day. They do not purport to have final solutions or even contain the best route to solving many of our problems. Diverse groups need to be included and consequently a whole spectrum of thought and intent must be embraced. *The emergence of women and minority groups in theological education and fresh awareness of sexism and racism as issues in theological education mean that the diversities are larger than has been recognized and the spectrum of thought more expansive and explosive than had been presumed.* It is important to open new horizons into the future while preserving the best from the past. The standards are not meant to dictate, rather to challenge; not to close doors, rather to open them.¹²

When I first became involved with ATS in the early 1980s, there were two things we talked about: the increasing number of member schools, as the mainline Protestant seminaries that founded ATS were joined by Roman Catholic/Orthodox and evangelical Protestant schools; and how the student bodies of ATS schools were changing. During the 1980s I served on the Under-Represented Constituencies Committee, which was made up of women and persons of color (male and female). Theological education was slowly leaving behind its white male image. African American theological schools were growing, and a few institutions were retooling to serve Hispanics. The biggest changes, however, surrounded the dramatic increases in female students.

Women had been attending theological schools long before the rising feminism of the 1960s and 1970s. Most women earned degrees in religious education designed especially for women. Yet, as churches grew during the post-World War II population explosion and popular religious revival, denominational leaders realized that they did not have enough men to provide leadership for all their congregations. Some churches began active recruiting of women for ordained ministry.

Women preparing to be pastors and preachers were generally only welcome in denominations with “free church” polity, where local congregations could call a woman to be their pastor without major difficulties. Gradually, however, more “ordered” denominations (Methodist, Presbyterian, Episcopal, and Lutheran) loosened their strictures against female clergy. Some women within the Roman Catholic Church enrolled in ministry preparation programs on the heels of the Second Vatican Council. The Roman Catholic Church did not ordain women, yet these women studied so that they could serve the needs of their church and be ready for ordained leadership should

it come. Roman Catholic parishes created new positions for theologically trained women. Protestant women moved into head leadership positions and church members became increasingly comfortable with female preachers, pastors, and priests. In the 1970s, female enrollments in theological education began a steep climb, and that led to increasing agitation to increase the numbers of female faculty in theological schools.

My first position in theological education began in 1975. It was a direct result of the activist efforts of a student women's caucus that pressed the administration and the board of trustees of one seminary to hire more women on the faculty. I was asked to teach one course on women and ministry and then encouraged to apply for a tenure-track job. I did, and became the first full-time female faculty member in a school that was rooted in a denominational tradition that had ordained women for more than one hundred years but still had no tenure-track female faculty members. When I went to seminary in the early 1960s, I never saw a female faculty member. I never thought about it. By the 1970s, however, the male dominated culture of theological education was changing. Women students pressed aggressively for more female faculty and administrators.

Initially it was easier to hire more female administrators. Faculty turnover is slower, and hiring criteria are often weighed down by biblical and denominational limitations. Moreover, in the 1970s, fewer women possessed the academic credentials that would make them eligible for faculty appointments in theological schools. By 2001, nearly 24 percent of chief development officers, 34 percent of chief student personnel officers, and nearly 33 percent of chief financial officers were women. Furthermore, according to ATS Annual Data Table 3.6, dramatic increases of women were seen in positions such as CEOs; CAOs; chief financial officers; chief development officers; head librarians; and staff overseeing student personnel, field education, and continuing education. Nearly 22 percent of all full-time faculties in ATS schools were women. (See Figure 1.)

Women destabilize the theological task

When we look at the increases of female students, administrators, and faculty in ATS member schools from 1971 to 2007, it is appropriate to ask about impact. What happens when theological education becomes intentional about supporting women in the top leadership positions in theological schools? In 1995, Sharon Ringe, a New Testament professor at Wesley Theological Seminary in Washington, DC, wrote an essay about women and theological education for the World Council of Churches journal *Ministerial Formation*. In that article, Ringe spells out various ways that increasing numbers of female students, faculty, and administrators challenge institutional habits. Schools start scrambling to adapt schedules and policies in order to survive. More importantly, Ringe argues that when women are taken seriously "we are talking about a new method of going about the theological task—a panoramic array of views reflective of the diversity of women's stories and realities, which destabilizes the theological task." In chaos theory, she continues, destabilization is not necessarily bad. In fact many writers insist that destabilization is good, because chaos is the basis and prerequisite for all life.¹³

Figure 1 Relative proportion of women in ATS member schools

Source: Data reported by schools on the Annual Report Forms and retrieved from ATS/COA database.

Note: Gender information about ATS Administrators from 1987 to 2005 is not available.

With more female students, administrators, and faculty in theological schools, things begin to change: the physical environment is different, the questions asked are different, and answers become more complex. With women in theological school classrooms and offices—which have been male for centuries—the culture of theological study begins to function in different and sometimes destabilizing ways.

Of the approximately 500 CEOs and CAOs in the Association's 252 member schools in November 2007, sixty-three (13%) are female. Four schools have two female administrators (both the CEO and CAO are female). Therefore, we can say that at least one woman is a CEO or CAO in fifty-nine (23%) of the 252 schools in ATS. The percentage of the 252 schools that have female CEOs (presidents, principals, or heads), is slightly more than 8 percent.

These statistics are somewhat underwhelming. Yet, among certain types of ATS schools the numbers are respectable. Among the lower numbers are the Roman Catholic/Orthodox and evangelical schools. Roman Catholic and Orthodox schools, according to canon law, cannot have a woman be the head (CEO) of a seminary preparing men for priesthood. Three female Roman Catholic CEOs are in our study, however, because their schools focus on nonpriestly educational programs. Furthermore, many evangelical schools believe that biblical texts related to gender do not allow women to exercise public headship roles in the church or in a theological school. Attitudes about

this may be changing, but there is no female CEO in any evangelical school in our sample.

Among the 101 mainline schools, however, eighteen are led by female CEOs. Within the remaining institutions not governed by Roman Catholic/Orthodox canon law or by the reading of biblical texts to prohibit headship by women, nearly 18 percent have a female CEO. Although the percentage of female CEOs in public and private universities offering master's degrees in 2006 hovered around 22 percent (22.7% in private schools and 21.5% in public schools), ATS mainline theological schools, with 18 percent female CEOs, are not far behind.¹⁴

Among the ninety-seven evangelical schools in the ATS membership, seven have females serving as CAOs. That is about 2.5 percent of all ATS schools and 7 percent of all evangelical schools.

In Canada five female CEOs head 14 percent of the 35 Canadian institutions in our sample.¹⁵

Women in Leadership (WIL) research project

Who are these women? How do they get into these leadership settings? Numbers are interesting, but we wanted to know more, resulting in a research project that is more qualitative than quantitative. In order to understand the situation of female leaders in ATS member schools, the Women in Leadership Advisory Committee decided to interview by telephone all sixty-three women serving as top administrators in member schools (twenty-one CEOs and forty-two CAOs). In many research projects, it is impossible to sample a complete population; however, given these smaller numbers, we could do it if each committee member conducted between five and eight interviews.

Even with sixty-three women, however, getting 100 percent participation is nearly impossible—sabbaticals, travel, personal resistance, schedule conflicts, and administrative structures conspired against our goal. In the end, however, we completed one-on-one telephone interviews with fifty-nine of the sixty-three women (twenty CEOs and thirty-nine CAOs) for a response rate of 94 percent. These women were eager to share their thinking about their work and women in leadership.

One goal of this research, funded by the Carpenter Foundation, is to provide insights to guide future work in ATS as it seeks to (1) support the professional development of women in theological education, (2) enhance the capacity of theological schools to use the gifts and abilities of female faculty and administrators, and (3) inform educational programs for female students. Before I became involved with the project, the WIL Advisory Committee decided to focus the research project on female CEOs and CAOs. Although there are many female students, increasing numbers of female faculty, and numerous female administrators in penultimate positions in theological education, there were still relatively few female CEOs and CAOs, and we wanted to find out why.

The evolution of the Women in Leadership research project has not been linear. Some decisions were made early on, whereas other insights emerged later. For example, as the advisory committee began to design the interview

questions, options were shared with senior women administrators at the annual ATS Women in Leadership Retreat in March 2007. These women were asked to think about what questions the advisory committee should be asking and what experiences they thought should be shared.

Input from the small groups at the retreat enriched our thinking:

- Our stories help us make sense of our failures and successes as women, but it is not always about gender. Race or circumstances of the particular context may be the key theme of the story.
- Our roles are time-limited, and it is liberating to know we are not stuck forever. Discovering a sense of freedom as well as naming the limits of our freedom is helpful.
- Having space to tell a story is a gift as well as the occasion to craft a common story with other women.
- Women can have an impact on the institutional culture of theological schools. There may be a “tipping point” (30% women?), when the institution changes dramatically because of women in leadership.
- Certain institutional rules may help or hinder women.
- Some institutions that call their first women to a position of leadership unwittingly jerry-rig the situation to set them up for failure. Clarity about boundaries, job description, and evaluation help women to succeed in leadership roles.
- Sometimes men are the ones who empower women, at times making sacrifices and taking risks to do so.
- Women’s lack of skill in financial matters and the assumption that women know nothing about money are problems.¹⁶

Basic information about female CEOs in ATS

With only 8 percent of ATS member schools headed by women, we wanted to find out how they came to their positions: Are there predictable patterns? Did they seek out their positions? Were they encouraged or discouraged to consider leadership positions? How did they make their decisions to take such jobs? Did they think about gender issues when they were considering the position? Did they feel some sort of “call” from God to explore or accept the job?

Most of them told us that they never aspired to their position nor imagined becoming the head of a theological school. Several of them admitted that they actively resisted the idea.

The youngest female CEO in our sample took office at thirty-seven years of age and the oldest (an interim) began at age seventy, with the average age when women took office being fifty-two. At the time of our interviews (January to June 2008), 20 percent had served for more than ten years, 35 percent had served for more than five years, and 45 percent had been in office for less than three years. The average female CEO has been in office for almost five years and the longest female CEO has served nearly 18 years. The turnover of leadership in institutions of higher education is high, but our female CEOs are doing as well as women (and many men) in secular institutions.

Ordination and denomination

In the history of theological education, professors and administrators of theological schools usually have been ordained clergy in the denomination sponsoring their institution. Theological schools are closely aligned with denominational identity, and the mission of theological schools is to prepare leadership for churches in particular ecclesial traditions. In recent years some schools have been founded, merged, or joined consortia to serve multiple religious traditions and to embody an ecumenical vision. At the same time, other schools have become more focused upon shaping leadership for particular ecclesial and denominational groups.

Therefore, our research about female leadership in theological education examines the issue of women's ordination. If women are unable to hold ordained status in a particular denomination, this often means that no women are eligible to be in charge of its theological school. Furthermore, how long a woman has been in ordained ministry in a denomination might influence whether she is seriously considered to become the CEO of a theological school. The top leader of a school, male or female, must have both ecclesiastical support and administrative skills to be trusted to sustain and manage the institutional life of a theological school.

We explored the denominational connections of the women in our sample. Are they ordained? Have they been pastors? Did they stay rooted in one denomination throughout their lives, or did they change? Do they have MDiv degrees?

Chief executive officers

Before the 1950s, many Protestant denominations did not ordain women to full clergy status. Sixty percent of the female CEOs in our sample were born before 1950, which means that their vocational formation took place in the midst of the mid-twentieth century feminist movement. During the 1960s and 1970s, we know that more and more women felt called to ministry, but many times they were unable to be ordained in the denomination of their youth. Some of them changed denominations.

Seventy-five percent of the women who are now CEOs in ATS member schools have never changed their ecclesiastical identity. Among the 25 percent who have changed denominations, two had grown up in the Baptist tradition; one of them, however, became a Roman Catholic, which is not a stepping stone toward ordination. Others moved from Presbyterian, Lutheran, and Methodist denominations to other mainline denominations. The motivation to change seems to have had nothing to do with the policies or politics about women's ordination.

Furthermore, it is striking that all of the female Protestant CEOs (85% of female CEOs in our sample) belong to denominations that ordain women. Only the Roman Catholic CEOs (15%) belong to a church that does not ordain women. Even more striking, however, is that 30 percent of the female CEOs who belong to denominations that *do* ordain women are *not* ordained.

One female CEO, who belongs to a denomination that ordains women, but is not ordained herself, has actively resisted pressure to seek ordination. When asked if she had considered ordination, she replied:

No I didn't think about ordination. A lot of other people thought about it for me, and I used to tell them, "Just keep your hands off of me. I'm OK the way I am." I did not ever feel called. I have a very clear idea (I think) of the Baptism of all God's people. (57)¹⁷

When we look more closely at those who are ordained, it is clear that their ordinations came long before any professional relationship to theological education. In other words, they did not seek ordination in order to be eligible for leadership in theological education. In fact, all of the ordained female CEOs in our sample have been ordained for more than twenty years, with ordination dates ranging from 1973 to 1988. Before and after ordination many of them served in church settings, and/or were involved in other educational settings. All but two of the female CEOs (the two who are interim presidents in our sample) have earned doctorates.

Chief academic officers

The chief academic officers in our sample are a bit less consistent—36 percent are currently affiliated with a denomination different from the church of their childhood, whereas 64 percent of current CAOs remain in the denominational tradition of their childhood. Among those who changed, no logical pattern emerges. One Roman Catholic woman is now an Episcopalian. Half of the CAOs who grew up in a different denomination are now United Methodist or Presbyterian/Reformed. When we combine those who changed and those who did not change their denominational affiliation, 59 percent of female CAOs are clustered in Presbyterian, Reformed, or United Methodist churches even when they are not serving in schools affiliated with those denominations.

This is curious. It may be that because the polity or church order in Presbyterian, Reformed, or United Methodist denominations is rather formal—often spelled out in great detail in Presbyterian Books of Order or Methodist Books of Discipline—the resulting ecclesiastical framework is more stable and trustworthy for women. Change in these denominational traditions may take longer, but when it occurs, it provides a solid framework of support for women who assume church and educational leadership. When new rules are instituted, it is difficult to deny opportunities to qualified women.

Denominations rooted in congregational polity are less predictable and more uneven in their institutional support of women, despite the fact that there are often no formal barriers to female leadership. Hierarchical denominations sometimes seem to be the most resistant to female leadership, but when change is eventually embraced, their formal patterns of church order give women incredible support.

Looking at our whole sample of fifty-nine CEOs and CAOs, almost 36 percent are not ordained (40% of the CEOs and 33% of the CAOs). Predictably, all but two of these women do not have an MDiv degree (the prerequisite for ordination in many denominations). Twenty-two percent of all the female CEOs and CAOs who belong to denominations that ordain women are not ordained. Fourteen percent belong to denominations that do not ordain women. At present, 64 percent of top female leadership in ATS schools is ordained. As more women assume top leadership positions, the historic link between ordination and administrative leadership in theological education may decline. On the other hand, as denominations become more open to ordaining women, the historic link between ordination and administrative leadership may be more easily preserved. It is not clear what this might mean for theological education.

Age

Among the 20 percent unordained female Protestant CEOs and CAOs in our sample, 64 percent were born before 1950 and 36 percent after 1950. For the rest of the sample, those born before and after 1950 were equally divided between CEOs and CAOs. None of the unordained female Protestant CEOs and CAOs were under fifty years of age when they took office, 82 percent were between the ages of fifty and fifty-nine, and 18 percent were over the age of sixty. This shows that younger women in top administrative roles in theological education are more likely to be ordained. A crosstab analysis of all the women CEOs and CAOs by age in our sample shows that 95 percent of female CEOs and CAOs under the age of fifty are ordained, whereas only half of female CEOs and CAOs between the ages of fifty and fifty-nine are ordained. Given our small sample, it is impossible to determine “statistically significant” differences, but it appears that younger women in leadership have not encountered problems seeking ordination and, therefore, they are more likely to be ordained. Over time this will correct some of the present “ordination gap” between male and female leaders in ATS member schools.

These facts support our experience of ATS women in leadership. Female CEOs and CAOs, especially the younger women, respond to a call to ministry early in their lives. Many of them are part of the first generation surge of women who went to seminary and were ordained in the 1970s and early 1980s. Fifty-five percent of these women earned an MDiv degree and were ordained within two years after completing that degree. Ten percent got their basic theological degree and waited five to ten years before seeking ordination. But none of them sought ordination to enhance their credentials for administrative leadership positions.

Taking the job

We wanted to know how female CEOs and CAOs came into their positions; therefore, we asked them what they were doing before they became head of their school or its top academic administrator. No dominant pattern surfaced. However, we do notice that 60 percent of the female CEOs in our sample

were previously employed in some setting outside the institution they now lead, and only 40 percent rose from within their school to become the CEO.

Female CEOs who come to top leadership from outside their institutions have considerable experience in church work and nonprofit organizations. As they reflect on their vocational journeys, many of them feel that coming from outside their schools gives them a broader base of experience. Several of them say that they think that being a newcomer or outsider is an asset. When a school hires someone from the outside rather than promoting from within, it suggests that the institution is willing to explore new patterns of executive leadership.

For top female academic leaders (CAOs), however, the pattern is reversed. Seventy-nine percent in our sample moved to institutional leadership from administrative or faculty positions within the same institution, and only 21 percent came to the CAO position from the outside. This makes sense. Academic leaders need to know the academic culture of their schools. They do well when they can build on previous faculty experience and credibility in the same school.

Yet, some of these CAOs tell us that promotion from within a school has serious drawbacks. Familiarity can prevent people from taking female leaders seriously. Female CAOs, who come to their administrative position with a lot of experience in faculty and administrative matters, tell stories of being unwittingly pushed into academic administration. As responsible faculty members, they are skilled and committed to their schools. They do well. When the school administration asks them to oversee programs, chair committees, manage faculty searches, or monitor accreditation self-studies, they say "yes."

Although male faculty who move from being faculty members into administration may also be treated poorly, female CAOs were often dismayed by the process. They explain how they were already doing many parts of the CAO job as a faculty member, or they had accepted an interim assignment, and then, without much consultation or even their knowledge, it turned into a permanent responsibility. This, they complain, is a mixed blessing. On the one hand they are flattered. This means they are doing a good job. But within their institution, because they are a known quantity, they also feel taken for granted. They complain that women are not treated well. They say that the informal appointment patterns of women faculty to administrative leadership undermine their effectiveness. The journey from being an ordinary faculty member to being the top academic leader of a school is messy. It is flattering to be seen as effective and to be popular, but often it is not good for the schools or for women. It is patronizing. It is demeaning. Women feel used. One cynical female CAO explained that the CAO at her school is always a woman. "The institution feels it's easier to elect women because they know we'll do the administrative work and be responsible and overachieve in it so other people can think great thoughts." (30)

On the other hand, these women admit that when they are asked to take on interim or temporary administrative responsibilities there are benefits. They learn on the job and gain confidence. They are able to win over colleagues who are skeptical about whether they can do a good job. The women themselves

discover that they have skills that are needed and they like administration. When asked to consider a top administrative post, they are ready to respond.

There are also situations when women take on leadership positions because of their commitment to gender balance and their passion for change. During a search they look around at those who are also considering or being considered for the job, and they are troubled. One woman explained,

I soon realized that the only names that were being suggested were men, not a single woman's name. I couldn't bear it. I just absolutely couldn't bear it. I thought to myself, if I don't step up to the plate here, we are going to continue, for a whole 'nother sort of generation, to have all-male leadership. (52)

Another reflected,

I was perfectly satisfied doing what I was doing, but I was actually nervous about what it would mean to introduce an outsider into the situation at this point in time . . . this conviction within me that I could do this job, and do it better than any of them, kept growing within me, not in an arrogant sense, but more in a sense of concern about the outcome, because I know how important that position is, and I was on this faculty, and I wanted a dean that I could work with. (19)

In the end she decided to submit her application as a "defensive" act—accepting the CAO position because she wanted to keep it from going to another colleague. She sought to protect the school from what she believed would be a big mistake.

Although only 15 percent of ATS member schools have a female CAO, in some settings having a female CEO has become normative. One woman explained,

The faculty as a whole consider the job to be so administrative they don't want to have it, and so they look for somebody who will take it on, and they assumed, and rightly so, that I had the gift for it. They thought, "Oh God, if she'll take it, let's have her do it." [This attitude] then impacts how you relate with everybody, because it's not seen, in our institution, as [a prestigious job]. It is seen as prestigious everywhere else except within our own dean and faculty. . . . Consequently, I have ambivalent feelings about it. I recognize that it is a position of high profile and potential leadership, and I also recognize that, for a long time, they have had all women doing the administration so that none of the men have to worry about working that hard. (11)

Tenure and contracts

Chief executive officers

Fifty-five percent of our CEO sample does not have tenure. All but one of the eleven female CEOs who do not have tenure came to their positions from outside their present institutions. It may be that apprehension about an outsider, or about calling a woman to be a CEO, causes search committees or boards to be extremely careful about tenure. Most of the women are practical about their lack of tenure. They applaud the need to keep administrative appointments separate from faculty tenure-track appointments.

On the other hand, the 45 percent of female CEOs who have tenure are usually faculty members chosen from within the school. They are a known quantity. In most cases they will not accept the job as CEO unless they can keep tenure. One insider woman gave up tenure when she became CEO (school policy), and two outsider women bargained for tenure before they accepted the CEO position. Generally speaking, however, the majority of the female CEOs, tenured or untenured, feel it is better for their institution to have top executive leadership that is untenured. At the same time, they wonder if the same thinking prevails for male CEOs. Some of these women might have desired tenure, but as institutional leaders, most of them recognize that a tenured CEO can limit institutional options. Female CEOs in our sample who are tenured believe that their status as a tenured leader makes them more effective. They refuse to give up tenure. They state that having tenure gives them more power and credibility with faculty colleagues.

Chief academic officers

Attitudes among female CAOs about tenure are less flexible. Fifty-nine percent of female CAOs are tenured. This means that if they wish to do so, they can return to faculty status at the end of their season or term as dean or academic vice president. They work closely with other tenured faculty, and many of them believe that their effectiveness is directly related to the fact that they are tenured. Many of them have been at their institutions for a long time. They look at institutional change with realistic eyes, and what they see varies dramatically from school to school. As already noted, in some institutions the CAO position is normally filled by a woman, is untenured, and does not have great status. At other institutions the CAO position is central and lofty; and because it shapes the academic agenda, at times it has more power than the CEO.

We asked both the CEOs and the CAOs if they had written contracts. Approximately 70 percent of both groups have written contracts or letters of appointment (sometimes for a set term and sometimes open ended). It is difficult to know what is meant by a contract, and details are quite uneven. Contracts may cover only the administrative responsibilities added to the status of a tenured faculty member, or they may spell out details for everything. The statistics on this question are not trustworthy. Yet, the women tell many stories about situations where it is hard to get things in writing. They wonder out loud if their difficulty in getting a written contract is related to some paternalistic assumptions surrounding gender. For women who come to CEO or

CAO positions from within their institutions, the idea of a new contract is often overlooked. Everyone simply assumes that their contract is spelled out in the faculty manual, or in some unwritten understanding that their term appointment is renewable, or not renewable. These situations are frustrating. The women lament this unprofessional way of treating contracts, and they do not believe that contracts with male CEOs or CAOs are treated so casually.

Educational credentials

Chief executive officers

We looked at the educational credentials of female CEOs carefully. Ordination is important, but academic credentials are also important markers of readiness for leadership positions in theological schools. Of the eighteen female CEOs with doctorates, 72 percent hold academic doctorates (PhD and ThD) and 28 percent hold professional doctorates (DMin and EdD). Eighty-three percent of the PhDs are in religious areas of study, with the remaining female CEOs holding academic doctorates in the social or hard sciences. For those who have earned doctorates in some area of religious studies, their subfields and specializations are biblical studies (25%), historical studies (6%), theology (43%), ethics (13%), and pastoral theology (13%).

Fifty-five percent have doctorates from mainline Protestant universities; 22 percent have doctorates from Roman Catholic universities; 22 percent have doctorates from secular universities; and 5 percent have doctorates from an evangelical university. Except in one case, the CEOs all completed their doctorates at least ten years before becoming the head of any theological school. The ecclesiastical and educational credentials of women serving as CEOs in ATS member schools are exceptionally strong. As pioneers these women meet or exceed all the formal and informal expectations that member schools have for the top administrators in their schools.

Chief academic officers

The educational credentials of female CAOs are even stronger.¹⁸ Among the thirty-nine female CAOs, thirty-three (85%) have academic doctorates (PhD and ThD) and three (8%) have professional doctorates (DMin or EdD). One has an academic master's degree, and two have professional master's degrees. Furthermore, 90 percent of the female CAOs hold degrees in religious studies. Statistics about their subfields are less clear, but among those who responded to this question, 24 percent specialized in biblical studies, 24 percent specialized in theology, and 36 percent specialized in pastoral theology. Their preparation in pastoral theology gives the CAOs important skills for nurturing academic excellence.

Twenty-four (61%) of the female CAOs earned their doctorates from mainline Protestant universities; seven (18%) earned their doctorates from Roman Catholic universities; and seven (18%) earned their doctorates from secular universities. Only one CAO earned a doctorate from an evangelical school.

Family

Marital status

Ordination and educational credentials are key objective factors in the selection of all CEOs and CAOs. For women, however, family issues are often more important than they are for men. In the long debates about women and the workplace, ethical and religious values are often linked to whether a woman is married, divorced, or never married. Among Protestant male leaders, being married is viewed positively. For women, however, being married can create problems. In some traditions being divorced is unacceptable. Because of the ways in which marital status shapes careers, we gathered basic information and asked questions about how administrative work affected family life. Sixty-five percent of the female CEOs in our sample are married or partnered. Fifteen percent of the female CEOs have never married (two of these women are Roman Catholic sisters), and 20 percent are divorced or separated. For female CAOs the numbers are almost exactly the same: 64 percent are married or partnered, 20 percent have never married (four of these are Roman Catholic sisters), and 15 percent are divorced or widowed.

Children under the age of sixteen living at home

Although many of these women are mothers and have raised families in the past, at present only one CEO has a child at home and only three of the CAOs have a child at home. These women are very busy, and they say repeatedly that they could never do their jobs if they had children at home. They also sing praises of their husbands and partners, who cook, clean, drive, shop, and provide emotional support. Speaking about her husband, one woman explains how sharing with her spouse is very important:

We both love our work, and we both share a fair amount of our work together, so he's a good listener, and I definitely use him as somebody to, you know, bounce ideas off, dump on when I've just had it with people, and all the rest of it. . . . there are men out there who give lip service to being supportive, but then if the wife's work interferes with their comfort, they're not too good with it. [My husband] is wonderful. You know, he really, truly, is supportive, and, you know, doesn't get bent out of shape about things, and all that kind of stuff. He's really great that way. (55)

Comparing Canada and the United States

Comparison of female heads to total heads of ATS member schools

ATS is a binational organization of thirty-five Canadian and 217 US schools. Of the sixty-three female CEOs and CAOs serving in ATS schools, eleven serve in Canada. All but one of these women participated in our research. Two Canadian schools have two women at the top (a female CEO and a female CAO), which means that nine out of the thirty-five Canadian schools

(26%) have at least one woman serving as a top administrator compared to fifty-two women (24%) serving in 217 US schools.¹⁹

Small but interesting contrasts

Hiring. Only 21 percent of the female CEOs in US schools came to leadership from within their institutions, whereas 83 percent of female CEOs serving Canadian schools came to their positions from within their schools. The sample is too small to make any meaningful comparisons between the ways in which they came to their positions.

Age. Female CEOs and CAOs in Canada are younger when they take office than those in the United States. The average age of top Canadian women administrators in theological schools is just under fifty years old. If we remove one retired woman from that Canadian sample (she is an interim who began her tenure as CEO at age seventy), the average age of female CEOs and CAOs in Canada at the time they assume office drops to forty-seven. Women administrators in US schools are five years older on average than their Canadian counterparts when they take office.

Contracts. I commented earlier about the uneven patterns among women CEOs and CAOs in our sample regarding contracts. With Canadian schools there is no ambiguity: all of the Canadian female CEOs have written contracts, whereas only 57 percent of US female CEOs have them.

Denominational affiliation. We find that only 20 percent of the women in our Canadian sample have changed denominational affiliation in their lives, whereas more than 34 percent of women leading US schools have changed denominational affiliation.

Ordination. More Canadian female administrators are ordained than in US schools. Seventy percent of female CEOs and CAOs in Canadian schools are ordained, compared to 63 percent in the United States, suggesting that female leadership in Canadian schools is well supported.

Racial/ethnic women

Finally, the racial and ethnic diversity among women in leadership in theological education is embarrassingly low. Five racially and ethnically diverse women (two African American CEOs, two African American CAOs, and one Asian American CAO) represented 8 percent of the fifty-nine female administrative leaders we interviewed and 2 percent of all CEOs and CAOs serving ATS schools. At several points in the interviews, women indicated their dismay with this situation and their conviction that theological education must do more to support the leadership of African American and Asian women.

Making the numbers come alive

When we look at these numbers, top female administrators in theological education are increasing in number in mainline ATS schools, while the presence of female CEOs and CAOs in evangelical and Roman Catholic/Orthodox schools remains extremely low. This is especially troublesome since evangeli-

cal schools are the fastest growing sector of theological education, with the highest enrollment and the largest faculties. Yet no female CEOs and only seven female CAOs can be found in the top administration of all evangelical schools in ATS membership.

Everyone knows that top leadership positions in higher education can be isolating, but gender increases loneliness. Female CEOs and CAOs interviewed for this project regularly find themselves alone or among only a token handful of women in meetings and in decision-making positions. Many of our interviewees shared vivid memories of their first ATS Biennial Meetings and their shock at the ratio of men to women (about 500 men and fewer than fifty women). With each Biennial Meeting, they eagerly count the number of top female administrators attending, and they are disappointed. Several women told us that it actually *feels* worse than it did several years ago, because as the number of evangelical schools in ATS membership increases, the percentage of female leaders stays level and may even be declining.

During the past twenty years, the percentage of female students in most ATS schools has hovered above 30 percent. The numbers of female faculty in ATS schools continue to increase. The paucity of female CEOs and CAOs stands in stark contrast. Women with top administrative responsibilities are rare, and women who might be encouraged to imagine themselves as CEOs and CAOs are hesitant.

I have listened to more than eighty hours of recorded telephone interviews with fifty-nine women. I have coded their words and summarized their experiences and their concerns. I have tried to “catch” the many coins of insight they are (symbolically) throwing into the fountain of theological education. I find them humming tunes about women’s leadership. They accept the fact that they work within tradition-bound settings, and they care deeply about theological education. They are wishing and hoping that things will improve. They invite us all (as the song does) to “make it ours, make it ours.”

Portions of this written report of the Women in Leadership research project were shared on October 24, 2009, at an ATS Research Summit in Pittsburgh. Twenty-five of the fifty-nine women who participated in the interviews attended, along with others who have since become administrators and a few invited male colleagues. In those sessions the statistics about women in leadership were summarized. The sessions also tried to make the numbers come alive with many direct quotations and first-hand insights gathered in the interviews. Comments from lively roundtable discussions have influenced this written summary.

The telephone interviews followed a set of questions prepared by the Women in Leadership Advisory Committee (see appendix). The quotations and summaries of interview conversations presented here are windows into the thinking and the experiences of women in leadership in ATS schools. They are not scientific results; they are human reflections. Some interviews are sad and others are funny. Some are wise and others are bland.

SECTION ONE: PERSONAL REALITIES (first coin)

Women in top administrative leadership in theological education are pioneers. There have not been many, and the expectations of female administrators in theological schools continue to be shaped by a long-standing male culture. Therefore the first arena of questions is personal and maybe even pastoral. Who are these women, and how are they doing? What roads have they traveled to get to these positions? What do they think about that journey? How do they feel about their work? What are the challenges and joys they encounter? How do we nurture women to imagine themselves in positions where few women have served?

Interviews began with personal questions about how each woman came into administrative leadership. How did they get these jobs? Did they seek them? Did people seek them out? Was it a good process? Was it fair? Was gender a factor? Did they feel that God was calling them to be a CEO or CAO?

Many of these women immediately put their situations into a broader framework by noting that they were pioneers and that the world was watching. One woman said that she was very aware that “this was probably an occasion where, hopefully,” she said, “if I did this, and didn’t mess it up, women who came after me would have an easier way to do things they were called to do.” (36) Another realized that “however I functioned in the office (or role)” would have an impact and that she wanted to be sure that what she did would not make it difficult for another woman in the future. These women sometimes harbor a fear of failure because they know that if they fail the world is watching. Failure, one said, will shape possibilities for women who come later. (49) Female CEOs and CAOs in theological education do not back off from the challenge, but they think about things that most men would not have mentioned.

First of all, it is clear that very few women (and men) formally apply for administrative positions or aspire to be institutional leaders in theological education. Women may have more ambivalence about seeking leadership positions, but administration in theological education is rarely something people aspire to. When individuals are approached to consider a CEO or CAO job, they are filled with questions. Women (and men) wonder, Why me? But women have additional questions: Do they really want me, or do they need a woman? Am I being asked because of who I am or because diversity is required and the search process needs candidates who are not white men? One woman said that she resented the question, but she also knew that such questions helped her clarify her awareness of herself “as a woman, and as a younger faculty person.” As she thought about it, she realized that if she accepted the position, she would be able “to represent different constituencies” [because she was a woman], and that was a worthy goal. (53) Another woman said,

People already expect women to be different. When somebody hires a man into a position that has always had men, it’s almost a comfortable feeling, and the man inherits the expect-

tations that went with the people in the position before him. When a woman comes in, particularly with a position that has not had a woman before, or not many of them, people expect something different. They don't expect you to do it the same way. They are worried about it because they are a little terrified that it might not be the same, but I think there is an openness to it. (35)

The recently published *A Handbook for Seminary Presidents* has a section on the issues and challenges facing female presidents. The *Handbook* notes that a fair number of female CEOs recognize that they are a "first." They are the first to hold their office in the history of their school or the first female administrator in a theological school related to their denominational tradition. This creates a "persistent undercurrent of performance anxiety." They know that they must "prove themselves." They carry a hidden burden pressing them to succeed for the sake of all women. Women CAOs do not feel quite the same pressure, yet the reality that female administrators in ATS schools are moving into institutions steeped in masculine traditions shapes the climate for all top-level female leaders. Male administrators simply do not have to think about that reality.²⁰

Being called and taking risks

We asked our female CEOs and CAOs if they felt called by God to their positions. Their answers were honest and varied:

I'm never real confident about saying I am called by God to do something, because I'm aware of my capacity to delude myself, so I'm really hesitant to blame this on God. If what you're asking is "are there questions of soul-searching and spiritual discernments?" certainly. I was part of that; I just don't want to blame things on God, that God led me to take responsibility for. (54)

Well, it felt like a call. It felt like some people thought I had something that I could offer, and I think that a call from God always comes through people. It certainly has to be tested by people, if not through people. I mean, lots of people have a notion that they have a call, but it has to be tested by the church and the other people. (4)

It took months for me to come to the conclusion that this job would be right for my life and my ministry. And there was one profoundly important factor: this job was much better for my family. So, you know, I'm a layperson, not really accustomed to talking about calling all the time. [Yet] I'm very much accompanied by God in this, and I feel God's presence with me in a very powerful way in this job. (31)

I did not apply. I was invited to apply. I declined twice . . . because I did not feel that this administrative path was one that I had been prepared for. Ultimately, I became convinced that it was a call, and a lot of call, biblically speaking, is a sacrifice. And so, I ultimately said yes. (51)

It's more this kind of nagging . . . What should I be paying attention to, points of clarity? Intuitively I have known for a long time that some kind of academic administration, whether it was exactly dean, I didn't know, but some kind of academic administration [was in my future]. I ended up hearing this kind of odd refrain from the book of Esther . . . maybe it's you "for such a time as this" — "for such a time as this." (48)

I guess I want to say that I do believe in that. I believe in people feeling called by God, and I have sometimes felt called by God in my life. I would not say that about this. I would say I was restless and I was looking for a larger world, to do some things a little bigger or a little bit more wide-reaching. (13)

Yes, absolutely. I mean, no spooky voices in the night, but absolutely I felt a call, because everything rational in me—and I'm a very rational woman—said, "Why would you work twelve months a year instead of nine and get very little additional salary? Why would you do this, and take the flack, and take the heat?" That makes no rational sense to me. I had the perfect job—thinking, teaching, and writing—so the only reason to accept a position that runs against your rational choices is that you feel called by God to do the work. (26)

For me that means my gut, my sense of awareness. What feels right? What decisions am I fighting? What am I trying to talk myself into? Because those seem to be where I usually am not quite in sync. My kind of philosophy of all of that is that there is this stream. What you want to do is get in this stream and not be trying to fight it. Go with the flow . . . This felt like the flow to me, and it didn't take me more than five minutes to say yes. (45)

In our conversations with these women there is ambiguity. They do not aspire to leadership as such. Yet, authors of a new book, *How Remarkable Women Lead*, based on interviews with women in business over the past five years, note that women tend to look for meaning at work more than men, whereas men go for pay and status. Furthermore, men take more risks. The authors report that this is because women are natural relationship-builders. Women in business are more inclusive and work to build consensus to reach decisions. Of course individual women in leadership do take risks to get to the top, but the

research shows that they don't take as many risks as men. Women tend to wait until they have all the necessary skills or the full answer. The book suggests that successful women need to learn to let go of all the things they have under consideration and put energy into focusing.²¹

When we talked with women in leadership in theological education, they said that they thought that women can and do take risks more easily. One told us,

I think men are big cowards. I mean, when I look at men in leadership, they're all so afraid of so many things. . . . I think women are able to risk because there are less safety nets for women. Jumping off the cliff is really, "Oh, well, what the heck." I mean, the woods are burning behind us. We might as well jump! I think women are able to take better risks with less calculation. (21)

Many of our interviewees were ambivalent about leadership. One suggested that women need to learn how to "toot their own horns." "That is difficult," she confessed, "I just have always assumed that if I do a good job, people will notice and applaud. But they don't, so sometimes you have to tell them, 'Have you noticed how good I am?' That's hard to do." (14)

Female administrators in theological education wrestle with gender issues in numerous ways. They do not want to stereotype. They want to celebrate the collegial and caring gifts of women *and men*. They know that biology is not destiny. Yet, they find that their experiences as women are different and that those experiences shape their work more than they sometimes want to admit. One woman put it this way:

There are all kinds of nonhierarchical men, of course, and various sorts of women. I went through an era when I thought, oh, these traits are evenly distributed in the population; but it is not true. I'm a mother, and of course men can have the early years at home, but in caring for an infant who cannot speak, one is constantly trying to discern the needs, and wants, and feelings, and comforts, and discomforts of the infant. It requires a constant practice in discerning what's happening. Turning your glance for ten seconds from the needs of an infant can sometimes mean life and death. In this situation one doesn't have the luxury of not attending to the other. In parenting certain patterns develop, whereby I hold my own needs and wants in abeyance, and I am conscious, all day long, of the well-being of this other human being in my life. I learn that to ignore them, even momentarily, can be disastrous. (15)

She went on to say that she believes that women's experiences make women in leadership more attentive. Women are not born that way; it is a learned skill often related to the common life experiences of women as they raise children or care for elders. Another woman told us,

I was socialized among a lot of men. I mean, I'm very comfortable with men. I just know that I'm different, and I have to work the more masculine side of my personality. I have to banter with them in a male kind of way that I don't have to do with other women and because I was socialized among a lot of boys, I can do that. It's just very clear to me how different it feels. (48)

Another said,

I think that women who exercise strong leadership are not always viewed positively, whereas men who exercise strong leadership are assertive. [That's OK, but] it makes it more difficult for me to be in a place where I have so much power and authority. (37)

Insights about authority

Understandings of authority are shaped by institutional cultures and histories. Roman Catholic women in leadership, who are about 12 percent of our sample, name this dynamic most clearly. One told us,

I've always had to answer to authority being in a male structure, so that's been comfortable. But women religious have always been in roles of authority in my community, whether it's been in education or in healthcare. And women religious in general, for over a hundred years, have been in administrative positions. So in a sense that's not foreign. (9)

Institutional cultures sometimes seem to conspire against women. When we asked one woman how she was called to her position, her story was troubling. She explained that the male leadership in her institution was not ready for change. The selection process was terrible. They didn't have a good job description. They seemed just to cast around for somebody who could fit the bill and do a reasonable job. They did not look at how things might change. She laughed and said, "They operate on the Doxology principle: As it was in the beginning, is now, and ever shall be. Amen." "They need to realize," she continued, "that dealing with change is a growing edge for the whole place and that good organizations are organic—they will grow and change." For that reason it is important to evaluate the future needs of a position at the time that you are looking to replace the incumbent. With apologies she concluded, "I need to be rude now." "It was a very funny committee. There were a number of old boys on it and the old boys were just absolutely frustrated because you couldn't get this whole thing settled up in the back room over a scotch." (59)

Her story was not the only one reporting irregular processes leading to employment. Another woman said,

I received a telephone call from the chair of the committee, asking me to apply, and I still wasn't interested in applying, so I never really did apply. I did agree, at some point, to come and meet the committee once, just so that I presumed they needed to say they'd interviewed a woman, so I was going to give them that opportunity, but I did not want anything else to do. (36)

They did not seem seriously interested in her candidacy. Yet in the end she was offered the job and she took it.

Leadership questions emerge in many different ways. When we asked directly about issues of authority, one said,

I think about authority as the power to influence. That probably isn't the dictionary definition, but because I've been granted the position of authority, I feel I need to steward it. I use that authority to influence the institution, to influence things for the better. It's been a growing process for me to come into my own comfort with being in authority, to not be apologetic for it, to not try to minimize it. . . . What I'm growing in is realizing if I'm called to be a woman in leadership and I am in a position of authority, there are times I simply just have to lead, to exercise it and decide. . . . That's my growing edge. My default is to downplay that I'm in a hierarchical structure in this institution. [In this job] I'm learning to find comfort with the fact that I'm a female leader and not just kind of here by mistake. (15)

Yet CEOs, especially, discover that having authority and freedom to shape the culture of a school is exciting. One told us:

I would say about authority I am much more comfortable being president of this organization than being number two in an organization and having to manage the person above me. That is the position that women are often in. I've been there for a long time, and I am just delighting in being in my present position where I can convene people, set the tone, and help create a culture. In this job I am not working in an alien culture set by somebody else. I love that. (02)

Personal attitudes are important, and in order to encourage women to imagine themselves as CEOs and CAOs in the future, we need to celebrate the job satisfactions. One woman said,

In many ways we are pioneers, and I think the next generation will have it a little easier. However, we need to be really careful and intentional about mentoring the next generation and not giving off vibes like this is the most difficult job we've

ever done, because it isn't. That will scare everybody off. We need to be invitational about asking other women "Have you ever thought about doing this?" "You know it would be worthwhile if you could let your name stand for this or that." We've got to create an environment that sees this kind of work as an opportunity and as a contribution to the whole enterprise of theological education."(59)

One of the more interesting personal questions that we asked our interviewees was about appearance. When women take on leadership responsibilities, they have to be careful about how they look and how they dress. One CEO put it this way,

I believe that people comment on women, and I think people look at women in leadership and make disparaging comments about dress or personal appearance in order to tear that person down to a size they can accommodate. So people say, "Her skirt is too short." Or "She's got too much make-up on." "I did not think that she would wear pink nail-polish to a board meeting." People say stuff like that, but you know it's all froth. I think what they can't deal with is the competence that's wearing it. Appropriate dress and professional dress enhance a woman or a man. It says that someone wants to be taken seriously. Our faculty has talked about this, and the men all come in on the days that they are teaching wearing dress pants, shirt, and tie. On the other days, they show up in jeans and sweaters. That shows the respect. (59)

In view of the fact that the research project focused on women in leadership, we asked our interviewees if they thought that they brought any advantages or special skills to their jobs because they were women. Reactions to this question were mixed. Some of our interviewees were wary and concerned that we were overstating gender stereotypes. They were careful not to make simple generalizations about "all men" or "all women." At the same time, many women noted that the socialization of males and females is different and the cultural habits and male traditions in many of our schools present challenges to female leaders that are not shared by male leaders. Theological schools have been dominated by men for generations, and that reality shapes the context for women in leadership in theological education.

This question is difficult to balance. One woman began her interview by formally registering her concern:

I was struck as I read through the questions, how many of the questions appeared to assume an "essentializing" approach to gender, namely that women, in their essence, behave one way and men essentially behave another way. That's a theoretical framework that I reject. At various points I may want to mod-

ify the questions or respond directly to the assumptions in the question before teasing out my answer more specifically. (01)

When we asked specifically if there are things that women tend to do differently, one woman said,

I find that really hard to identify what they might be. There's a lot of talk about women being more collaborative and consultative, but I don't know. I have a lot of male colleagues who are like that. If I would identify anything, and this may sound kind of miniscule, it probably is kind of the whole notion of affirmation, a spirit, kind of an ethos of affirmation, gratitude, and hospitality. (49)

I think little girls are nurtured to be good at relationships, so that means that we trust relationships. We look for others to be in relationships, we make decisions, so I'm certain that's true of my style. I also know there are times when I have to make the decision, and while I could ask for input from others, it needs to be my decision, and I have to accept all the responsibility. I shouldn't try to presume that this responsibility is going to be shared by others, because it won't be. It will be all my responsibility, so I think I have a very collegial style, almost to a fault maybe, but there are many things where while I ask for input from others, it has to be my decision, and I'm the one who has to take the flack for it. (36)

The feelings and thoughts of the women who are now CEOs and CAOs in ATS schools are mixed. These women sometimes are surprised to find themselves in positions of power and influence. However, they wear their status gracefully. Many of them say that they love their jobs. They believe in what they are doing. They are a gift.

SECTION TWO: PROFESSIONAL RELATIONSHIPS AND INSTITUTIONAL FACTORS (second coin)

Women in top administrative leadership in theological education create and live with different relationships. Old patterns change. What happens when women hold top administrative responsibilities in theological schools? What skills do they have? What skills do they need? Are there special relational issues that develop when women are top leaders? How can they be anticipated and addressed? What blessings and gifts do female leaders think they bring to the institutional needs of their schools? Can they be recognized and cultivated? Do schools (boards, administrators, and ecclesiastical leaders) need to know and do some things differently to help women flourish?

Information gathered in our interviews does not always fit into airtight clusters, because, as we all know, life is rarely neat and tidy. There is always overlap. Thus far I have highlighted personal realities and personal thoughts about the call to leadership and individual understandings of authority. The second cluster of interview quotations examines the ways in which women CEOs and CAOs think and talk about relationships and institutional responsibilities. The quotations explore questions of leadership and authority, especially the interpersonal relationships and institutional dynamics of their jobs.

It is important to say that the women we interviewed are deeply committed to what they are doing. They believe in the enterprise of theological education, not just their institutions and not merely in their personal skills. They have learned to “think institutionally.”

A recent book by Hugh Heclo titled *On Thinking Institutionally* suggests that there is a difference between “thinking about institutions” and “thinking institutionally.”²² Drawing analogies from sports and business, Heclo says that many people are very skilled managers of institutional success. They are sports stars and successful educational and corporate CEOs; they make smart moves and build winning organizations and careers. But they are mostly thinking *about* institutions and not *thinking institutionally*. “Thinking institutionally,” he says, “is not a purely intellectual exercise. It is a mixture of cognition and emotional attachment yielding habits of action.” “It happens when people do what they are supposed to do to uphold the values of their profession and their organizations’ larger purposes.” “People,” Heclo continues, “recognize the dysfunctional, unsatisfactory quality of an anti-institutional way of living.”²³

When we listen to ATS women in leadership, because many of them are newcomers to administrative power, they understand what Heclo is writing about. Of course there are many male CEOs and CAOs who also understand, but women in leadership within the culture of theological education bring some fresh insights that can help all of us think more deeply about our values.

Our conversations with these women are inspiring. These women care deeply about theological education. As Heclo puts it (using a baseball analogy)—they care about the game, not just hitting the home run or even winning the World Series. A theological school is not just a setting where the individual skills of women rather than men are beginning to shine; the school is “that whole rich tradition of people and events that define appropriate performance”²⁴ One woman put it this way:

I’m just blessed that I’m able to take my visioning capacity, my discernment, my analytical ability, and shape it in such a way that I can share with others, and they’re able to see why it’s worthwhile to either listen and then, after listening, to even dare to move forward to see what would it be like to put this thing into reality. . . . I believe that this institution can change. I’m prayerful that it will operate with a new awareness, so that when I leave, it will be at a very different point than when I entered. (20)

We asked these women, what does it take to do this? What skills are needed? How is leadership defined and how is your leadership received? Many women echoed the words of one CEO. "The most important skills necessary for my job are vision, management, and patience." (24) The word *patience* is repeated many times. These women tell us how they encounter resistance. They describe difficulties with candor. "Sometimes people refuse to meet with me, or they are simply passive-aggressive. "They don't do what they say they're going to do, or supposed to do, and I'm undermined. It gets tiresome." (39)

Yet, these women do not despair. We asked them, how do you deal with these frustrations? What are the qualifications female CEOs and CAOs need to have? One CAO told us,

You need the ability to go long periods without sleep. I'm thinking, you know, there are skills and there are kind of capacities, or qualities. . . . I would also say a sense of humor is indispensable. And I think the willingness to keep learning. It's a job where it's a constant stretch. I don't think there's ever been a boring day. And there are so many challenges that I could have never imagined when I took the job. So the ability to keep learning, to implement new behaviors, and to learn from mistakes, these are the skills needed. (06)

Yet, in the academic environment, several women were troubled because we often fail to honor the importance of these jobs and the value of these skills. One woman said,

The thing that surprised me was the amount of work that there is to it that's under the surface. The person who left the office said to me, "Well you know it's really not much of a job. I used to come to the office Tuesday, Wednesday, and Thursday from ten to two, and my assistant usually covered everything else." (59)

Many of the women we interviewed are appalled by that description. They believe that what they are doing is complex and demanding. It demands their best self. It is all consuming. It is extremely important.

Resistance to women's leadership

Inasmuch as the legitimacy of women in leadership is still questioned in some ATS member schools, we asked the women to talk candidly about situations in which they experienced resistance and how they deal with resistance:

I try to be gentle. I try to be gentle with folk, because I know that if you cut off a guy at the knees, it will only confirm his negative perspective. I'm an educator. I try to lead them beyond where they are, and both with reason and with mod-

eling character, because character and compassion are more persuasive, at times, than rational argumentation. (33)

I had some gender stuff when I first got here. But now most of those guys have retired. They would all sit together in faculty meetings. It was really almost childish. They would just pick at me, and I would just calmly respond to them. I never raised my voice. I never got angry at them, and some of the women faculty would come to me afterwards and ask, "How did you do that?" I realized eventually that I won them over. I won them over by not taking their bait and by showing that I could do the job. I think you can win a lot of people over by not letting them get to you. I smile. There was a time when I thought it was my responsibility to convince them of things. But, people have their own stage of growth, and I just keep doing what I do, checking in with them every once in a while to see if they've changed their minds. (57)

I refuse to leave the table. I strategically moderate my behavior to ensure that the outcomes that I want are taken seriously—so I'm very strategic, very political, but I refuse to go away. I'm quite different from some of my friends in that regard, and I have more stamina. In fact, I had a close friend and associate tell me that I had more stamina than anybody she knew. I have been taking, basically, insults all my life and not allowing them to undermine my sense of personal well-being or integrity. (31)

I say to them I recognize that there are passages in Scripture that would cause you to question me, but I read that differently. However, I understand how you are reading it, and I don't want to shake that for you. I firmly believe that God is using me in ways beyond my imagination, and I imagine that's true for you—that I am way beyond your imagination of what women should be doing. . . . When my role is questioned I don't back off from it, but I don't debate them either. (36)

I am a licensed minister, and my church does not ordain women. I went through all the processes that an ordained man does. I was for the most part well respected. There were times when I was a little uncomfortable when I was labeled a feminist, because I've never considered myself in that camp. But, just by virtue of being who I am, called to ministry, exercising my gifts, and being high profile, I am here. I have learned to be very careful. (03)

How I do it is by just not going away and continuing to consistently raise questions, like after a year of being on that council all I'd have to do is raise my hand when they were appointing members to this committee or that and making decisions and just thinking of the good old boys. People knew what I was going to ask. I don't create a scene, but I don't go away, and I'm consistent. That's what I do. (38)

Resistance to women's leadership takes many forms—sometimes it is very subtle. One CAO told us that resistance sometimes comes cloaked as an expression of concern:

People say things like, "How are you doing?" and "I'm worried because you seem stressed out." When they are overly solicitous or using flattery, [I have come to recognize that] this is really a way of putting me in my place. (54)

One of the most troubling sources of resistance for many women in leadership is the resistance of other women. Several women lamented this discovery and shared their pain:

It has been such a surprise, because my whole life I've always had such a sense of solidarity and support from women. I have always, and still have, a wonderful web of women colleagues and friends, of pastors and other administrators, especially through the ATS program, and community organizer friends who are women. Yet the greatest challenges have been from some of the other women on the faculty. And that's been painful. I don't want to overstate it. But when things go bad with a women colleague, they tend to go really bad. I don't know what that's about. I want to think more deeply about what is going on, and I haven't, just haven't, figured it out yet. (06)

Another woman grieved,

I have to say that one of the most shocking and personally disappointing, deep grief kind of things that I have had during my time here, is that the most severe resistance has come from women colleagues, who were my faculty colleagues previously. And at the same time, I have experienced tremendous respect from my male counterparts in the institution. . . . This remains one of my deepest griefs. There is a spirit of suspicion, jealousy, and competitiveness coming from the women. (49)

Looking at the whole picture, one CEO put it this way:

I have felt resistance from both women and men—a different kind of resistance. The resistance from men is basically an unwillingness to really be in a subordinate role and take directions. As males, they know better than I do, and therefore, they will instruct me, and they're happy only to the degree that I allow them to operate in this capacity. The minute I ask for accountability, and suggest that that role isn't appropriate since I'm the president, that's where we have difficulty. In terms of the women, it's been an interesting scenario, watching the way some women expect me to accommodate their level of expertise or understanding, or their programs, or whatever they think should be best. When I have felt that that was not correct, or chose to not operate in sync with that, then a kind of resistance emerges suggesting that I am not a girl player. So I've experienced not being a boy player and not being a girl player. To the degree that I was affirming of any of them, then they were satisfied, but if I chose not to, that was considered an unfavorable response from me. . . . I've had some people who thought we were going to work together, but it didn't work out because I didn't know that they thought that meant that I was going to follow their directions. It is absolutely fascinating. They told me, "This is what we should do, and this is how to do it." And when I said, "I'd also like to look at another perspective here," they were no longer interested in us working together. (20)

Women find different ways of coping with gender expectations, male traditions, and long-standing habits. One woman noted,

A woman always has to work harder particularly in a male, clerical, ordained environment because the historical piece is that the priests were around to be priests and the sisters were around to work hard. Although things have changed somewhat, there's still an element of that obnoxious clericalism that shows up when you least expect it. . . . old habits die hard. (59)

Another said,

I think you've just got to learn to think like a guy. You are going to have to play their game more than you might like to. I don't know if there are gifts that I bring as a woman that a male wouldn't have had. I can't even remember. However I probably get away with more, I think sometimes, because they don't want to attack a woman in the same way they might a guy. (45)

When we asked women if they did any teaching and why they did or did not, the rhetoric was always very positive about teaching. Yet, although they thought it was important, many of them admitted that, given all of their other obligations, the quality of their teaching was suffering. Their ambivalence was intriguing. One CAO told us, "It's important symbolically. How can you have a director of academic programs who isn't engaged in education? How can you value something so highly and then take a position that doesn't have it?" (35)

As we moved through the interviews, we focused on relationships. The effectiveness of female leadership in theological education is directly shaped by a cluster of key relationships: The relationships of a female administrator to her senior administrative partner, to trustees, to faculty, to ecclesiastical and community leaders, and to staff are crucial. The health of these relationships has a direct impact on institutional health.

Relationships between CEOs and CAOs

Inasmuch as the effectiveness and success of women in leadership depends on relationships, we pressed women in our conversations to tell us how gender played out in various kinds of relationships. For example, in the four institutions that have women in both CEO and CAO positions, they emphasize how wonderful it is to work with female peers. They celebrate the bonding that exists among women who share common experiences. One CEO remembered a situation when she and her female CAO were talking about their male colleagues. I said, "You know the boys take care of each other." Immediately her colleague (the CAO) got teary. She was embarrassed, but thanked her CEO. "I can't tell you how refreshing it is for someone in your position to even get that point, much less articulate it." (31)

Over and over our interviewees talked about the importance of the relationships between male and female CEOs and CAOs. Healthy respectful interaction between the CEO and the CAO is the single most important relationship for the health of the school. Yet, there is no foolproof recipe for success. One woman stated, "Our relationship is very open and direct, probably not as structured as I would like, but it kind of works for both of us. I can say anything to him. He can say anything to me. We work very well together. We understand each other's patterns of work." (27)

Another described her relationship to her male CEO this way:

I do a lot of sounding board things. We're not friends in a palsy-walsy way; in fact, I think I avoid that simply because you can't be seen as in the pocket of the president. I think women have to watch out for that. I'm really accountable to a variety of constituencies, but certainly our relationship is amiable and certainly it's constructive and it's professional. He'll ask, What do you think about this? What would happen? What do you think the faculty would do if this happened? . . . Sometimes it's more directional. [Yet] I can count on one hand the times in three years that I've said to him, "you absolutely need to do this." (30)

Another woman told a fun story about her relationship with her male president. They had decided to celebrate faculty birthdays because there had been a lot of birthdays in one month. She said,

We were out in the hall ready to bring in a cake when I turned to him and said, "I just can't; I don't want to be known as the cake dean. It feels so gendered." . . . So he took the cart in, and he lit the candles, and he led the singing. It was so great. I didn't have to be the cake dean. He understood. (06)

Sometimes, however, a relationship is difficult. We asked for examples. One CAO reflected on how her president was always micromanaging:

I worked with him for years. I was the smiling, smooth, efficient, cheerful coworker for years waiting to make some headway with him on this, waiting to earn his trust or whatever it took. After a few years, when nothing had changed, when, if anything, he was getting to be a much worse micro manager, I started to push back. . . . But, he could not deal with that. . . . We have not been able to reach an agreement on how we should work together. Anything that works for him feels like he is down my throat, and on my back, and in my face to me. Anything that works for me feels to him like he's not involved enough. (13)

Another woman talked about the patronizing habits of her CEO:

While he is very respectful of me, there's a patronizing edge in it. . . . He's the big daddy, uncle type, and he'll call me "Kiddo" or "Hey, Love." He says that to all the women, "Hey, Love" or "Hey, Kiddo." And there's something about his view of me and others under him in that way of speaking to people, of which he is not entirely aware. (44)

Several women reflected that, "men often see women who are part of their staff or their administrative council as either mother, sister, or daughter." Therefore, one CAO said that she was very explicit, telling her male CEO colleague:

I don't play those family roles, and I know that we all get tracked into them. You need to know that as soon as I see myself being pulled in that direction, I will pull back, because I will not be your sister, and I will not be your mother, and I will not be your daughter. (54)

Other relationships

When we asked if gender plays a role in the relationships female administrators have with trustees, we heard the following:

I'm very much aware of the gender issues at work, and sometimes I'm offended by them. Sometimes really absolutely annoyed by them. They never go away totally. So I look for alternative routes to move through the process and not to let my gender block progress toward our goals. I don't violate my gender, I don't deny it. I am very much woman—I am who I am—and I operate out of that space. But at the same time, I don't try to change the perspective people have. I simply ask them to take a look at the job that I'm doing. (20)

I have a chair of a committee on our board. He's a senior citizen male who was a former civic leader, and he's used to bang, bang, delegate, get things done. It drives me absolutely crazy, because he will ask me something, I will give the answer, and then maybe five minutes later he'll thank someone else for having done that or having given that information. I just overlook it nine times out of ten, but every now and again it just really gets to me, and then when I say something, the board thinks I'm too self-promoting. It drives me crazy that he cannot affirm or recognize a female giving leadership. It's just who he is. He comes out of that socialized pattern that is sexist and chauvinistic. It drives me nuts. Sometimes I can swallow, and sometimes I can't. (49)

I'm happy to be a powerful symbol for them, and I've encouraged them to see all women who are in executive positions as more two-dimensional folks who will not live up to all of their expectations. And I suspect that I will not either, but I'm happy to play the role of demonstrating that women can achieve in powerful positions. (31)

I think it is very powerful for women students to experience a female leader. I have had a couple of our women students say to me, "We just think you're an amazing model for us. We pray for you." I experience that in a very tender way. (49)

Different comments surfaced when we asked about interpersonal relationships with staff.

I've had tons of experience working with faculty, but not really any with staff. . . . I hate oppressing people who are in a more compromised position. So I have a harder time laying down expectations with people who are in a much lower salary level than I do with faculty. (21)

Some women discover, when they move into a position that has always been held by a man, that staff members are grieving the loss of their male

father figure. Often they are happy he is gone, because he was hard to work for or because he was “selling the school down the river.” “So,” one woman chuckled, “they’ve all decided they will live with the mother.” (21)

In terms of day-by-day relationships with staff, female CEOs and CAOs say things like:

I’m probably less willing to ask someone to go get me a cup of coffee, because I can get my own cup of coffee. I don’t think a woman should have to do that for me, so there are some things that I’m probably less willing to ask someone to do, because I don’t want it to look like that’s just what women do. Generally I think my relationship with support staff is easy. Sometimes we talk about woman things together. I think it’s a little more relaxed than it might be if I were a man. After all we share the same bathroom. (36)

Sometimes staff members think that I have no backbone and that they can walk all over me and do what they want to do. This is not true. I also hold people accountable. . . . I think it’s the authority thing that people struggle with, even if it’s not obvious to them. They don’t expect that I will take authority and say or do what I mean to say or do, and when I do that, it surprises them (19).

Sometimes there is resentment from the female staff, explained another CEO:

When I say, “I’m going to come in late” to compensate for something, I sense a resentment from them that I’m not here when they’re here. I don’t work 9 to 5—I work 24/7. It’s a weird thing. Now would they resent men? I don’t think so. I honestly think that’s a gender thing. (49)

When we asked our interviewees what surprised them about their jobs and how they deal with stress, almost half of these women said something like, “The unending unrelenting nature of it. There is never enough time.” Yet, they find ways to deal with stress and keep themselves healthy.

I make sure that I attend to my physical well-being, getting exercise regularly and having a couple of consistent things that are part of my life. I swim and I take ballet, and both of those are really good. It’s really interesting. The two are very different in the way they work, because with swimming laps, my mind is roaming all over the place while my body is working . . . it’s early in the morning. I’m waking up anyhow. Sometimes I’m actually writing sermons while I’m swimming, and sometimes I’m working through another problem at work. It is really helpful think time. The ballet is a kind of

discipline where I've got to be absolutely alert and shut everything else out, and so it really helps me practice that kind of focus and mind control. (37)

Many of these women do not talk a lot about their families, but they are clear that family makes a difference. One CEO says,

I could not do this job without my family. My family is very supportive and very nourishing. My house is a refuge for me. I don't do any work at home, so when I go home, I'm there and engaged in family activities and all of that. My family is critical in terms of emotional support and nurture, nourishment in every way. (07)

Finally, women recognize that learning how to push back is necessary. They say that they are learning how to do that in the face of interpersonal and institutional realities:

I have been a good Christian girl, and so my tendency is to say, "Well, yes, I see where you're coming from," and I try to put myself in the other person's shoes. What has been hard for me is to learn to say, "No, you're simply wrong," and to fight back. Yet, sometimes I need to do that. (54)

One senior female CAO reflected about a future, celebrating the ways that younger women look at relationships differently.

There came a time when I learned really well how to read people, how they're feeling, their sensitivities. I can walk into a room, and I can sense what the temperature is in the room. I notice if somebody looks sad, or if somebody looks like they're bursting with excitement. I think those were skills that were honed by my gender training. My sense of wanting spaces to be beautiful and hospitable for people, and the . . . deep concern I have for relationships and how relationships are going. I think those are skills, or capacities I learned because of my gender training at the particular time that I was growing up. . . . There are other skills that I see some of the younger women exhibiting, that I think are really impressive, and I have a lot to learn from them. . . . I think, in different generations, women will have opportunities to cultivate different kinds of skills. (6)

SECTION THREE: SYSTEMIC CHALLENGES (third coin)

What can be done to nurture and strengthen the leadership of women? In what ways does top female leadership in ATS schools have any impact on boards, faculty, staff, students, and ecclesiastical systems? How have the efforts of ATS and the increasing numbers of female administrators in theological education nurtured women, and how has the system ignored and even thwarted the effectiveness of female leaders? How has ATS supported women? What has worked? What things should be continued? What things might be enhanced? What has been ignored? What concerns need to be addressed? Are there new ways that ATS ought to support the leadership of women in theological education?

We have been working on this project for more than three years. It is interesting and important to listen to women in leadership in ATS schools. However, the motivation for this research is systemic. What do we need to know about theological education to make it better?

During this time I have consulted many books and clipped articles from scholarly publications and the popular press. As we move to exploring systemic issues, a long-standing discussion about bureaucracy needs to be revisited.

Bureaucracy and leadership revisited

Published in 1984, *The Feminist Case Against Bureaucracy* by Kathy Ferguson argues that men and women in bureaucracies are caught in traditional and systemic patterns of dominance and subordination.²⁵ It claims that men and women have learned certain skills to survive in contemporary society, and women, like bureaucrats, have been socialized to survive by embracing “femininity.” Ferguson makes a “feminist case *against* bureaucracy,” challenging women to claim an alternative voice, one grounded in the experience and perceptions of women that challenges bureaucratic patterns of control found in most contemporary organizations. Feminists, Ferguson says, need to reformulate basic political questions of power, reason, and organization. Feminists need to decentralize decision making, reduce rules, and flatten hierarchy. “Bureaucracy” is “male dominance in structural form.”

I was prompted to go back to this feminist case against bureaucracy when I encountered a recent paper, titled “A Feminist Argument *for* Bureaucracy,” written by Leisha DeHart-Davis in the Department of Public Administration at the University of Kansas. Her title was intriguing. Her paper rejects the thesis of the 1984 book. Women, she argues, do not need to escape from bureaucracy. In fact, she says, bureaucracy actually helps women because bureaucratic systems do not mimic societal gender relationships. Good bureaucracy ignores gender. She insists that there is no evidence that bureaucracy “feminizes” subordinates to cater to the whims of superiors.²⁶

DeHart-Davis claims that unbureaucratic organizations are not less gendered than bureaucracies. In fact there is evidence that organizations with weak bureaucracies are often controlled by informal male-dominated structures that

disadvantage women. Her article turns the 1984 book upside down, arguing that bureaucracies actually benefit women “by buffering them from informal male-dominated networks and thus leveling the organizational playing field and empowering them as organizational contributors and leaders.” She uses research statistics and interviews with female employees in four Midwestern cities to make her case.²⁷

She also cites a 1970 classic essay titled “The Tyranny of Structurelessness” by Jo Freeman. During the earliest years of the feminist movement Freeman analyzed small groups of women gathered in supposedly liberating leaderless “consciousness-raising groups.” She concluded that, instead of “liberating” women from structures, these unstructured “consciousness-raising groups” actually led to new structural patterns of discrimination and exclusion.²⁸ DeHart-Davis agrees with Freeman and sets forth recent evidence to support the importance of bureaucracy for women. She notes that women in professions that lack formal structures, such as law, have a cumulative career disadvantage, because there is a positive correlation between formalized personnel policies and better career opportunities for women in government and business. The women she interviewed in her research insisted that they like the “efficiency, equity, and legitimacy” of bureaucratic organizations. Bureaucracies, she concludes, are helpful to women, and efforts to diminish bureaucracies sometimes have adverse effects on women.

This discussion of bureaucracy can be linked to ATS, ecclesiastical structures, and accreditation standards. How do the structures and bureaucracies of theological education support or thwart women in the traditionally male culture of theological education? How can our institutions and ATS itself cultivate best practices to strengthen and enhance the opportunities and the effectiveness of female CEOs and CAOs?

In dealing with these questions it is clear to me that we cannot approach our schools with a business mindset. Although top administrators, male or female, do need to raise money, manage property, and hire qualified personnel, we need to retrieve systemic health. For female leaders to thrive (indeed for male leaders to thrive) we need to become more intentional about Christian faithfulness.

This is because we recognize that there is a deep relationship between effective leadership and Christian conviction. Although every faculty member and every student may not have sorted out this relationship, top leadership in ATS schools, male and female, cannot ignore the connection. Systemic challenges are organizational, but they are also theological. The health of the system literally depends upon Christian concepts of leadership.

Unfortunately good leaders are not always willing to speak openly about the theological foundations of their leadership, yet they agree that good theological education is not simply educational programming *about* Christianity, or educational credentialing related to the management of institutional systems. Theological education is grounded in faithfulness. The system rests on the faith of its leaders, not simply their administrative or management skills, not their teaching and scholarly talents, not their cultivation and fundraising successes (as important as they are). The systemic challenge is to find and

nurture a realistic theological mindset in theological education. This mindset is pragmatic, not idealistic; it is practical, not ideological.

In 1977 the newly formed ATS Committee on Women argued that,

The emergence of women and minority groups in theological education and fresh awareness of sexism and racism as issues in theological education mean that the diversities are larger than has been recognized and the spectrum of thought more expansive and explosive than had been presumed.²⁹

I am intrigued by the last phrase, “diversities are larger than has been recognized and the spectrum of thought more expansive and explosive than had been presumed.” Although this language never did become part of the ATS Commission standards, the idea that the presence of women and minorities in the systemic culture of ATS challenge thought, not merely organizational life, is important.

In our era, as the ATS Women in Leadership Advisory Committee discussed the interview questions for this project, there was a desire to craft questions that would allow us to explore the arena of ideas. Do these women in leadership have a theology of leadership? What nourishes that theology? How does their theology challenge the historic male system, if indeed it does? We wondered if the presence of women in top leadership in theological education might suggest different patterns of thought about leadership. What do these women think? Do women in leadership in ATS have a theology that informs and undergirds their work? If maintaining systems and/or changing systems in theological education ultimately flow from certain patterns of thought, what are those patterns of thought?

Theological and biblical images of leadership

To explore these questions, we asked the fifty-nine women we interviewed to reflect about the ways in which metaphors, images, and symbolic aspects of their faith shape their understandings of leadership. We asked specifically, “Are there theological or biblical images of leadership that guide you in your work? If so, what are they?”

The answers to these questions are revealing. Therefore, before sharing practical insights from these women about how to address the systemic challenges facing theological education, we explore the ways in which female CEOs and CAOs think about theological and biblical images of leadership:

As a woman I probably lean into the servant leadership notion. I am in service to the institution. I am not here of my own ambition, and I always try to keep the lens of what’s in the best interest of the college, its short term and its long term. (49)

The image that guides me is what I call *incarnational leadership*. By that I mean a form of leadership where the leader likes to be present in the midst of the people, learning by being a part

of the group. It is a praxis model. I hate the term *servant leadership*. It clearly wasn't invented by women or persons who actually were servants! Many people like it, but I don't. (23)

I really resist, at this point in time, notions of servants. But [being] pastoral . . . in the sense of equipping the saints . . . is the image that works for me. (34)

I like the *kenosis* image, self-emptying, but I'm also aware of the risk of that, because for codependents like me, it's a pretty creepy one. I love the image . . . but increasingly, I'm coming to see that I really need to be doing what I really want to be doing with my life energy, and so if this is really not it, then I need to change direction. (02)

Other women did not talk about servanthood, but told us about biblical characters and stories that inspire them.

I am inspired by the story of Shiphrah and Puah (Pharaoh's servants). They're my heroines, because I love that there's a little bit of the oppressed and a little of the oppressor in each of us. We're always kind of on these boundaries of underestimating the power and authority that we have or overestimating [it]. I think sometimes leadership really is subversive, which is another thing I like about that story. I love it that they go to the Pharaoh, and they're going to stay alive if they can, so they're not going to tell him, "We disobeyed you." They're going to say, "You know, those women, they're just so tough—they have their babies before we get there." (06)

I was thinking about Lazarus's sisters Martha and Mary, because I think I identify with both. . . . Being more the Martha I always say I'm a "do for" —I'll do for you. I'll do for, I'll work, I'll do something, but Mary's the one who is the person of presence . . . So I try and get a combination of not just being the work horse and doing the work but being the person of presence and listening. (09)

I think Deborah, who was willing to go to battle and was a sign of God's presence with Barak, is a key image in Judges. I like Deborah's willingness not simply to give wise counsel but also to get in a chariot and go. That's a key issue. Take on the hard things; stay with it. (33)

Anybody can have a vision. The ones who are wise are the ones who can find the resources to support their vision and carry out their vision. So that story of the wise and foolish

virgins reminds me that it's not quite having an idea about theological education or about the church; it's trying to find what's necessary and making it real. I like that story in terms of my fundraising role here, but also in terms of trying to save us from foolish notions of what the vision is. Anybody can make an ideal out there, but trying to make it happen in these circumstances with these limitations, that's a lot harder. (44)

I like to think of women who are called to something special, not necessarily with the power of a prophet. I think of Mary being called to give birth to this Christ child as a prophetic role but not necessarily one that would be identified as powerful. I tend to like the underdog. I like people in the Bible who were the ones no one expected to do what they did. (26)

Moses was mentioned by several women:

The Moses story has been very guiding for me, [I'm] leading people to a promised land that I won't get to see, probably in all its forms, and the kind of oppositional issues, and the bickering that happens along the way, as you take them into change and work to form covenanted relationships and structure for that. (49)

Several women laud Moses because of his meekness, but also celebrate his authority. They are impressed that he listened to his father-in-law's directive to delegate. (28) Another woman is grateful for biblical stories about the ways certain leaders resist God.

There are a whole string of biblical characters who keep trying to say to God, "No. No. Not me. Please ask somebody else." Moses and Jeremiah and Jonah and Amos and all those guys—they are good models for me, because God was able to use them even in their protesting that they didn't have the gifts, that they couldn't do it. Those are really good images for me, because God used them in powerful ways. They resisted believing that they could be the leader. Those are not the kind of images most people would pick up, but I resonate with those guys. (36)

The image of the midwives in Egypt is lifted up again to emphasize another woman's conviction that collaboration and quiet behind-the-scenes leadership is sometimes the most effective.

The problem I have with so many biblical images is this sense of aloneness and me against the world as a single person. I just don't think it works. So I think maybe I like the midwives who just did what they needed to do and actually probably

had more influence on change than some of the lonely people running around with their clothes off trying to get people's attention. (57)

Of course, not surprisingly, many of our interviewees talked about Jesus and see his ministry as a model for their leadership. For example:

I think about Jesus's leadership and the way he really heard and responded, and sometimes even changed. I think of the story of the woman who said, "Even the dogs eat the crumbs." And he said, "Oh, yeah OK." So that kind of listening and engaging people is of critical importance for me as I think about leadership. I think of his attentiveness to prayer as well as attentiveness to the people around him. I look at Jesus's example of leadership in a lot of different ways. (37)

I envision Jesus as a teacher and leader who looked people squarely in the eyes so deeply that he didn't see any of the rest of them. He didn't see color. He didn't see gender. He didn't see background. He didn't see class. And if you look folks in the eyes and try to see who they are, then you can work with them as creature of God to creature of God, and that's what I try to do. (46)

One of the things I identify with is Jesus recognizing that people see very much in parts—we all see very much in parts. Institutionally, people see very small slices of a bigger picture, and he always had a bigger picture in mind. That's a lonely place to be, but it's a powerful place to be—to see a longer vision, and a bigger horizon, and a whole, rather than parts. I have meditated on the passages where Jesus clearly has some bigger idea about things, and people are not yet getting it. (31)

Jesus models an image of leadership that speaks to me, which rejected all forms, and all misuse of power, and all forms of entitlement, and showing off. That really speaks to me—the servant leader thing—the doing what you need to do and trying to stifle your need for acclaim, thinking of others first. (02)

Some of our interviewees do not find biblical stories, images, and texts helpful. One said,

There aren't a lot of women to look for in the Bible. I could talk about Esther, I suppose. But, the Bible does not offer me very much. I can say that the idea of a servant leader is built into me as a Christian, but. . . . I've lived in this world (a man's world) the whole time I've been a professional, and it's always

been a struggle to find a model. So I don't know. I tend to look more to fictional models or fantasy, like Wonder Woman. The Bible has not been friendly to me. (14)

Other women hear our question about biblical images more broadly and do not focus upon texts, stories, or biblical characters, but use more general phrases and classic theological concepts to describe ideas that shape their leadership.

The biblical image that actually caused me to say yes, finally, to this job, is Isaiah 58. "You shall be called rebuilders of walls, restorers of houses in ruin." It is very much what I think is the reason I finally took the job and tried to approach it in the way that I did. (51)

Ephesians and its "equip the saints for the ministry" text is important. I do what I can to equip myself, but I'm also aware that I have to give people the resources, support, encouragement, and freedom—whatever is needed for them to do their job. . . . to equip the saints. (5)

Scattering seeds has been an important image for me. It shapes my whole understanding of social Christianity and its future. It is what theological education is doing. We scatter, but not randomly. One of the things that I've worked on is to begin the process of discerning where are the wildernesses where we can scatter most helpfully. We cannot scatter everywhere, all the time. (21)

In the dean's office you do a lot of atonement. You absorb anxieties, and you absorb hurts and suffering, the deep suffering of people. Some way or another you need to take all those feelings and transform them into positive energy. I think that's what atonement is. (16)

The larger theological vision that empowers everything I do is a Trinitarian theology that believes in community, hospitality, and openness to others. And so the image of *perichoresis*, which is the movement of God that invites our participation, is the singular theological vision that empowers my understanding of theological education and my functioning as a leader. (33)

I have an image of the dean standing at the tomb and pushing away the boulder. It's not only the women at the tomb identifying the empty tomb; it's more the angels and the guardians pushing the boulder aside so that you can see that the tomb is empty and you can act on that image. (16)

I think about theological and biblical images of hope. I like Romans 15:13, “God of hope.” That’s a name for God that’s not in those traditional lists of names for God. We are practitioners of hope, and every time I walk into a meeting, that’s what I want to be, an agent of hope, a practitioner of hope, because that’s what we’re trying to be in this world. (15)

Words about how the Bible and theology inform the leadership of women in theological education are important. These ideas shape the ways female CEOs and CAOs approach systems and institutional leadership.

Systemic challenges facing theological education

Given these theological foundations, how do female CEOs and CAOs approach practical questions about our life together in ATS? We asked if they have been involved in ATS Women in Leadership retreats and seminars. We asked for ideas about how ATS might provide better support for women on the job. We asked if there are governance or policy changes that need to be made. We asked if they think that theological education will change as more women serve as CEOs and CAOs.

Several themes surfaced, but not many new things. Women want to come to ATS programs, but full calendars, family obligations, and financial limits thwart that desire. Several women noted that concerns for balancing administrative responsibilities and family are no longer just “women’s issues.” They are shared by men and women. One woman said simply:

We’ve got to have more family-friendly policies in our institutional practices. The lives we live are very hard on our loved ones. I hear men now saying it as much as I hear women saying it. What I hear most is that women and men who are trying to negotiate how to share their lives between families and institutions need more institutional support. (02)

Many of the women say that the best training for their job comes from serving on accreditation teams. “Certainly the most focused experience is going on visits with other people. You come away from that having tremendous knowledge of other schools and also a good network of folks that you can call on.” (13)

Another woman shared her realism about institutional change:

I can’t change the culture of my seminary and my relationship here: I just have to work with who I have one on one. But if there were colleague groups from different seminaries—maybe seminaries that were not similar—who came together for regional colloquiums to begin to talk about how we support each other in administration and on faculty and how to create holy friendships and alliances, that would be exciting. (26)

Several women told us that they were surprised at how backward they find ATS.

The thing that has surprised me the most is how happen-chance so much of theological education is. We could do so much more if we could find ways to be more intentional and proactive, instead of reactive. When you're looking from the outside, you assume that there is process and planning going on. So I think that [the apparent lack of planning] has been a surprise and a disappointment. (27)

Another woman remembered,

When I was first an academic dean . . . I didn't even know what I didn't know, or the kind of questions to ask, or what kind of resources would be helpful. There wasn't even a landscape for me to look at, which was very difficult. It's hard to know what to ask when you don't know what to ask. (37)

One of the last questions in the list of interview questions states that theological education has been a male culture for centuries. We asked if women see change and if they anticipate change. "There are only two things that will make a difference," said one woman. "One is getting women into positions of influence. And the other is just keeping pressure on, just keeping it visible, just keeping it on people." (13)

Many of these women want ATS to do more, but they are not very specific.

I think what ATS is doing is really important. [ATS could facilitate] structural change and [offer] assistance to people on search committees, doing academic planning, [and similar] things that definitely get at gender oppression from a systemic framework. [We need to get] past looking at women, or thinking it's a good idea, or thinking if you have one, you've done it. It operates to me the same way racism operates, and the only way to get beyond it is a systemic intervention. It's not sustained for the most part, not because people lack good intentions but because it is structural oppression. The only way to change things is to push at every level of the organization. To intervene. (30)

I think ATS needs some fresh vision. I think the accrediting standards need revisiting. Again, back to the word *bolder*: ATS needs to be bolder in terms of engaging schools in what are the models of theological education that will really empower and equip churches and the faithful for ministry. I think ATS should take a stronger leadership role. (34)

Some women lament the fact that their relationships with ATS are not life-giving. Reflecting on her attendance and involvement at ATS meetings, one woman's comments are typical:

Even though I can spot other women, I really do feel like I'm in a big conference room filled with men with very high opinions of themselves. I find that a little draining. I come back from those things exhausted. I don't think that I quite understand why, except for the fact that all the generations of academic resistance and tradition are right there in the room. (52)

Finally, despite discouragement about fixing the system and creating environments that sustain women, little things still give women hope. One woman said,

Oftentimes it's only when I'm sitting and talking with other women about my experience and somebody says to me, "Well don't you see where gender's at work there," that I get it. Then I am able to say, "Oh, yeah. Well of course." Those experiences give me a thicker skin, and when I get back home I am more effective. (37)

REFLECTIONS, CONCLUSIONS, AND NEXT STEPS

What have we learned about women in top leadership positions in ATS member schools? How do the voices of these women inform our thinking about the future of theological education? I have listened to hours of conversations with fifty-nine women in leadership in ATS schools. During the past twenty-five years I have been on the same journey, first as a CAO and then as a CEO. Now I see myself with new eyes.

As I look back and anticipate the future, I have been stimulated by a new book by Gail Collins titled, *When Everything Changed: The Amazing Journey of American Women from 1960 to the Present*.³⁰ She reminds us that things *were* very different in the 1960s. I know that firsthand, because I started seminary in 1961, one of four women in a BD class—now our MDiv degree—of nearly one hundred men. My mother was worried that I was doing something I would regret. She was "Mrs. Henry Brown." I loved her, but I wanted to be something different.

Collins writes about women's place in the 1960s:

[Women] were not meant to compete with men, to act independently of men, to earn their own bread, or to have adventures on their own. . . . They could not go into business without their husbands' permission or get credit without male co-signers. . . . Then, suddenly, everything changed. The cherished convictions about women and what they could do were smashed in the lifetime of many of the women living today.³¹

When Everything Changed describes the changes. Fifty years later most women work outside the home, have serious careers, and get paid good salaries (although their paychecks are still smaller than those of most males). Today young women think differently about themselves, and young men think differently about women.

Yet, some things have not changed. Feminism has not figured out how to help women (and men) raise children while holding down demanding jobs. Feminism has not remade the world of relationships. Feminism “has not resolved the conflicting desires for passion and domesticity, familiarity and romance, and the irreconcilable differences between those who love the Marx Brothers and those who prefer the Three Stooges.”³² Nevertheless, things *are* different than they were fifty years ago.

Is the glass half empty or half full? There has been great progress, and there has been backlash. Female students and many female faculty members in our theological schools refuse to call themselves “feminists.” I still consider myself a feminist, but I do not wave that flag in a militant way. I understand when female leaders today overlook and forgive some of the ironies and injustices in their lives. We cannot change everything, and we must choose our battles. Female CEOs and CAOs interviewed for this ATS research project are savvy women; they want to nurture healthy institutions without ideological labels or battles. They are not radicals; they are survivors.

What have we learned from this research? We have learned that change is slow and that “some things never change.” We have learned that women are resilient and creative agents for change and keepers of traditions. We have learned that there are not many dramatic differences between female and male leaders in theological education, because the female CEOs and CAOs want it that way. Yet when they attend an ATS/COA Biennial Meeting or serve on evaluation visiting teams, and when they talk about their work in confidential settings, they recognize ongoing problems.

The results of this research are not dramatic. The female CEOs and CAOs we interviewed are not agitating for ATS to do dramatically new things. They resist the idea that women’s leadership is defined by gender, yet they feel that the way they lead is somehow different from male leadership patterns. They acknowledge that differences *among* women and differences *among* men are often greater than the differences *between* men and women. Yet they also believe that until there is a critical mass of women in top leadership in ATS member schools, women in leadership will have some special needs. Over time they do believe that, as more women hold top leadership positions in member schools, the culture of theological education will slowly change.

What do we know now? There are not a lot of surprises. In some ways our findings are very conventional. Female CEOs and CAOs in ATS schools have levels of education and family relationships that look almost identical with those of male CEOs and CAOs. Most of them have been mentored by men. Many of them have done exactly what men have done to get into their positions. Few of them ever imagined that they would become the president, rector, or principal of a theological school. Few of them ever aspired to be an academic dean or academic vice president of a theological school. Yet, there they are, and they take their callings seriously.

When we ask them what ATS might do to help them do their jobs better, they do not come up with many new ideas—rather they applaud what has been done and ask ATS to help women take advantage of existing ATS programs, seminars, and retreats. Many of them say that getting time to do these things is increasingly difficult. Several suggest that ATS should hold more regional minievents with fewer overnights (which are difficult for women with family responsibilities). They tell us that finances remain a barrier to their participation. When resources are scarce, these women find it difficult to justify spending money on themselves. Scholarship assistance or awards are needed—and even then, many of these women will not actively seek financial assistance.

Furthermore, when women do participate, they want follow up, such as specific ways to enhance networking or to get executive coaching. None of these requests are new. Female CEOs and CAOs in member schools challenge ATS to tweak existing programs and expand options to make them more user friendly. Few of these women say anything negative about programs for Women in Leadership, although they do have general criticisms about the entrenched habits of ATS.

These women also tacitly agree that women in leadership are a destabilizing force in theological education. They are glad to be where they are, and they are eager to have more women join them, but they are also very realistic about the perils of “rocking the boat.” In some settings they acknowledge that over the past several decades, the place of women in theological education has gone two steps forward and one step backward. They challenge ATS to help them develop new skills. Several say that they and their female colleagues are beyond the era of “being first” and that they need something more than “Leadership 101.” There will always be new women in need of entry-level training, but existing female CEOs and CAOs challenge ATS to provide more advanced programs and events.

Feedback from the October 2009 research summit

After my presentations at the Pittsburgh research summit, October 24, 2009, those present talked about what they heard in a series of roundtable conversations. The quotations and interview summaries that I shared brought no surprises. In fact the research report reassured those who attended that their own experiences were normal.

In response to the first “coin,” they agreed that there is a need for better hiring and personnel policies. They want to be more assertive without being aggressive. They think it is important to encourage women to consider taking on leadership roles. In response to the second “coin,” they ask for more help managing key relationships and understanding expectations. Most of them believe that administrative workloads are not realistic, and the whole system needs to address that reality. And finally, in response to the third “coin,” they wonder if the needs of women are being downplayed or even ignored as ATS struggles to keep its members in one organization. In the near future, if the majority of ATS member schools cannot or do not support the institutional “headship” of women, what does this mean for ATS?

Five challenges

As I review the fifty-nine interviews and peruse the notes from the round-table conversations, I do not find a set of clear recommendations. Yet, I think it is possible to name five challenges facing female leaders in historically male settings.

Fix the image of administration.

First, theological education needs to become more intentional about fixing the image of “administration” among faculty, students, trustees, and church leaders. To take on the responsibilities of a CEO or a CAO should be viewed as a joy and an opportunity. Most of the women we interviewed said that they love their jobs. However, they also lament the fact that being a CEO or a CAO has a bad image for both men and women. Executive and academic institutional leadership is not held in high regard, and being a CEO or CAO is viewed as a burden. People joke about it.

What is behind this attitude? Why do we do this to ourselves and our schools? Taking on top leadership positions should not be a duty but a privilege and an opportunity. Being a CEO or a CAO should not be something to endure until one can go back to important things like teaching or local church ministry. Top leadership is important. It is an opportunity. These positions are pregnant with possibilities. How can we stop belittling and devaluing what we are giving our lives to? I am not sure how we change these attitudes, but I am convinced that we need to create and sustain a culture that believes and celebrates and honors the work we do. Being a CEO or a CAO is a high and worthy calling. We need to say that over and over, before anyone (male or female) will want to take up the torch and be our successors.

Make institutional structures effective for both men and women.

Second, we need to recognize that structures, bureaucracies, and institution-keeping are important; and we need to put more energy into making our structures just and effective for both women and men. How can we make our institutional systems more trustworthy? Faculty manuals, accreditation procedures, hiring practices, evaluations, strategic planning, training programs, and reward systems are important. Women and people of color are often jerked around or ignored, especially when policies and systems are not kept current, are not followed, or are only viewed half-heartedly. A great deal of grief will be averted when institutions develop just administrative systems and policies and consistently follow them.

We also need to do more to reward and celebrate accomplishments. The business world knows how to honor leadership and service. Many companies have employee-of-the-month recognition ceremonies, give prizes for meeting goals, and offer other perks. Academics chuckle and patronize these tactics. It is time to find appropriate ways to recognize those who keep our schools healthy. Let us find fitting ways to say thank you to people who do these “thankless jobs.”

Cultivate an administrative culture that uses biblical and theological language.

Third, we teach theology in our classrooms, but our committee and administrative life regularly ignores theology. Putting prayers at the beginning and end of events is often merely a hollow gesture. If leadership in a theological school is a form of Christian faithfulness, competent CEOs and CAOs need to “walk the talk” in everything they do.

Most of the women we interviewed in this project recognize that many of the ways females “think” about their ministries in executive and academic leadership are different from males. The differences are subtle. The responses of these women to our question about what biblical or theological images inform their work suggest that we need to go deeper. How can we help women and men in leadership “think theologically” about leadership?

We need to create more places in ATS to talk theologically. We all have common biblical loyalties, even when we read texts differently. There are evangelical biblical scholars who can seed our conversations. There are Roman Catholic and Orthodox priests with years of liturgical insight. There are active mainline Protestant leaders who preach and teach theologically. As a community of theological schools, we are not secular institutions promoting gender equality for tax benefits or to be more credible to unchurched people. We are women and men of faith who ground our activities in biblical understandings of leadership. What would it look like to set up opportunities to think more biblically about the nature of leadership in our schools?

As increasing numbers of evangelical schools join ATS, it is time to recognize and explore the wide range of attitudes about the role of women in those schools. Right now ATS Women in Leadership activities serve mostly mainline Protestant schools. Yet, there are hundreds of female students and faculty in evangelical schools. Even if those schools do not (will not) select women for top leadership positions, ATS needs to bring together women from evangelical schools to explore how ATS can support their needs. There is great variety within and between evangelical schools. These schools care about women. They need support as they seek to enhance the discipleship and ministry of women. Can we articulate a common theology of leadership that applies to all women in ATS schools? Can we cultivate a biblical and theological vocabulary to describe and strengthen women’s leadership in schools where certain biblical understandings of headship will continue to limit the leadership of women? What alternative patterns of leadership and authority can ATS support? ATS needs to listen to Roman Catholic and evangelical women more carefully.

Provide more creative and focused programs and training.

Fourth, there are a number of ways that ATS can provide more creative and focused programs and training. In the interviews I heard many suggestions:

- Link the needs of women with the needs of racial and ethnic leadership and develop some joint projects.
- Educate people about search protocols for administrative leadership and contract options. Insist that schools follow their own manuals and procedures.

- Provide one-on-one executive coaching to all ATS top leaders before problems surface.
- Develop a regional mentoring program (perhaps using retired administrators) and small groups.
- Don't mix events for different job holders. CEOs and CAOs do not want to go to events with registrars, student services personnel, financial officers, or development people. Sometimes CEOs do not even want to attend meetings with CAOs, and vice versa. They have different needs. They cannot take a lot of time, they want programs that precisely target their needs so that they do not have to spend a lot of energy explaining themselves and their situations or listening to others dealing with issues that are not theirs.
- Have regional overnight or nearby one-day events. Encourage people to prepare with online resources and follow up the events with telephone consultations. The existing programs for Women in Leadership are too far away and too expensive in terms of time and money.
- Find new ways to use new technologies, like smart phones and webinars.
- Promote mini administrative sabbaticals or in-service training/tutorials for CEOs and CAOs. At present people use sabbaticals to keep their research and scholarship alive, but new types of sabbatical time need to be devoted to revitalizing and maintaining administrative skills and energy.
- Continue events for new presidents and new deans, but also plan events for people after five or ten years in office. Plan events for people who are promoted to leadership from within institutions where they have been for a long time, and for people who accept leadership positions in institutions where they are newcomers. The challenges are different.
- In connection with ATS events for all leaders, experiment with having separate subsessions for women and men, for older and younger persons, for Anglos and people of color. These should be offered as presessions or postsessions, or special mealtime gatherings within existing events.
- Plan invitational events and award a stipend/scholarship to get women to come. If someone gets such an award/scholarship to attend, she will be more motivated to take the time and find the additional money to do it.
- Provide intensive coaching around the CEO/CAO relationship. This is the single most important relationship in ATS schools. Furthermore, because many CEOs come to their jobs after being CAOs, such coaching has a double benefit. It keeps the present relationship healthy, and it prepares CAOs to understand and anticipate the CEO role, should they move into that position in the future.
- Celebrate length of service at ATS meetings. Highlight local leadership and special accomplishments.
- Explore and promote family friendly policies and provide guidelines for schools.

Expand research about women in theological education.

Fifth, we have learned some important things about female CEOs and CAOs, but we need to know more about women in other parts of theological

education. We might partner with *In Trust* to do research on female trustees. We might partner with Auburn Theological Seminary's Center for the Study of Theological Education to examine patterns of leadership in predominantly African American and Asian American schools. What do church leaders tell us about women's leadership? As more female graduates from ATS schools serve churches and religious agencies, what can they tell us? We need research on how we can help women (and men) imagine becoming the CEO or CAO of a theological school, and help them become adequately prepared to do those jobs. How does the length of time that a CEO or CAO serves in office shape the health of a school? We need to do research on the leadership needs of ATS itself as evangelical schools become a larger proportion of ATS membership.

A recent study of one Presbyterian seminary, *Facing the Stained Glass Ceiling: Gender in a Protestant Seminary* by Barbara Finlay, notes that many male church leaders and seminary administrators are quite willing to have women as colleagues, "welcoming them as equals as long as they do not bring up new questions or try to reinterpret the faith."³³ Yet the influx of women in classrooms and congregations is putting pressure on denominations and theological education to explore the Christian faith differently. There is theological resistance. Finlay writes,

Women are asking difficult questions and attempting to forge new paths, and traditionalists are digging in their heels to stop them. Hence, the controversies over sexuality, over definitions and names for God, over relations with other religions, and so forth. All of these issues have developed . . . out of women's experience of marginalization and their consequent abilities to see themselves as fellow travelers with other marginalized groups.³⁴

Many of us may not pick the particular issues that this author names, but the voices of ATS women that we interviewed echo this assessment. Women in leadership are expanding ways of thinking about personal realities, about interpersonal and institutional dynamics, and about the challenges presented by organizational and theological systems.

Change comes slowly. In a 1972 study by The Fund for Theological Education, the researchers noted that schools and churches "never have the inclination to take actions that are in themselves right, renewing and re-forming without pressure from somewhere. They have a strange tendency to take action only when mandates are leveled and challenges offered [with seriousness]."³⁵ The question today is how new mandates might be leveled and challenges offered.

I close with one final quotation:

There was a season in my life where I actually eschewed gender-specific meetings, where I didn't want to go to things like women's retreats, women's conventions, or special events for women. . . . I was thinking, "We don't need special groups.

We're all human beings here, and we can learn and relate to one another." So, as a point of identity, I did not want to be relegated off to being the speaker at the women's meeting. I thought I should speak from the pulpit, not at the women's group. Over time I've actually changed. I've softened around that, and I've come to really appreciate that there are many things that can happen in mixed-gendered groups, and then sometimes something very special happens in the company of women, and I should welcome that too. (15)

Barbara Brown Zikmund served as project director for the Women in Leadership research study sponsored by Lilly Endowment. A former dean of the faculty at Pacific School of Religion and former president of Hartford Seminary, she was the first woman and the first dean to serve as president of The Association of Theological Schools.

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Appendix

Interview Questions ATS Women in Leadership Research Project

Becoming a chief executive officer/president or chief academic officer

- When did you start serving in this position?
- Did you apply? Were you invited to apply? Were you appointed or elected?
- Were you chosen from inside the school? Did you move from another theological school or institution of higher education? From church work? From a secular nonprofit organization or business?
- How do you feel about this selection process? Does it treat men and women equally?
- Did you feel “called by God” or guided religiously to accept this position?
- Did you think about gender issues when you decided to take this job? If so, what did you think?

Defining the job of chief executive officer/president or chief academic officer

- What experience(s) did you bring to the job? (type of work, years of service)
- Do you have faculty rank? Do you have tenure? Do you have a written contract?
- Do you serve for a set term in office? How long can you hold the position?
- What are the most important skills necessary to do your job?
- Have these skills and expectations changed in the past decade? How?
- What advantages or special skills do you, as a woman, bring to the job?
- What forms of resistance to your leadership in this job have you encountered? Was it related to your gender? Your ethnicity/race?

Professional life and development/support

- Did you anticipate and seek out this administrative leadership opportunity?
- Did you undertake any specific training for this job? Before or after you began?
- Is there a formal process for evaluating your work in this job? What is it? Is it helpful?
- What personal things do you do to obtain professional support?
- Do you have a mentor/coach? Or any other formal support system?
- How do faculty view the role of CEO/CAO? How does the church view the role of CEO/CAO?
- What has surprised you in your job? What has troubled you in your job?
- What would cause you to resign? What would you do (vocationally) if you resigned?
- Have you participated in ATS programs supporting women in leadership? When? Which ones? How were they useful?

Rewards

- How is your job performance evaluated? How do you deal with criticism? Praise?
- Are you paid equitably for your work? Have you ever asked for a raise? Is your job title appropriate?
- Do you do any teaching? How important is teaching for your job satisfaction?
- What activities related to your job give you the most personal happiness?

On the job relationships

- Briefly describe your relationship to your chief executive officer/president or chief academic officer. How does your gender shape that relationship?
- Briefly describe key aspects of your relationships to trustees and faculty. How does your gender shape those relationships?
- Briefly describe your relationship with students. How does your gender shape those relationships?
- Briefly describe your relationship with ecclesiastical and interfaith leaders. How does your gender shape those relationships?
- Briefly describe your relationships with support staff and how you delegate responsibilities. How does your gender shape those relationships or inform your administrative style?

Gender issues

- Authority is often linked to men. In some contexts biblical texts are cited arguing that women and men exercise authority differently. How do you deal with issues of authority?
- Comments about the physical appearance of women leaders seem more common than comments about men. How do you think about physical appearance issues as a female leader?
- Administrators are responsible for institutional finances. How has your gender influenced the way you handle financial management and institutional development?
- Some people say that women have a less hierarchical and more collegial leadership style. Do you think this is true? Why? Why not?
- Women are sometimes criticized for being too self-effacing. At other times they are criticized for being too self-promoting. How do you deal with this tension?
- Do you (or have you in the past) participated in gender specific causes or attended events dealing with women's issues? Why? Why not?
- Do you think you do your job differently than how a man would do it? Why? Why not?

Personal

- How has this job affected your family and friendship networks? Where do you get emotional support?
- What are the most stressful aspects of your job? What do you do when you feel overwhelmed?
- How do you take care of yourself? Do you ask for help? Why? Why not?
- Do you think that you are good at your job? What makes you think that?

Leadership

- Are there theological or biblical images of leadership that guide your work? What are they?
- How do you handle situations in which people think women should not be leaders?
- Leadership takes risks and presses for change. Is it harder for women to do that than men?
- Since you are a woman, have you taken responsibility for mentoring and supporting women?
- Theological schools have been dominated by men, how should female leaders deal with that culture?
- Will theological education change if more females become CEOs and CAOs? Why? Why not?
- What institutional policies or governance changes would make it easier for women in leadership?
- Are there specific things that ATS might do to provide better support for women in leadership?
- What other things would you like to say about women in leadership in theological education?

ENDNOTES

1. *Three Coins in the Fountain*, a popular song that received an Academy Award for the Best Original Song in 1954, was written for a romance film by the same name and refers to the act of throwing a coin into the Trevi Fountain in Rome while making a wish. The melody was written by Jule Styne and the lyrics by Sammy Cahm.
2. ATS member schools use different titles to describe top executive leaders: president, rector, principal, dean, head, or provost. Many of these same titles, sometimes with a variety of qualifying adjectives, also define the person who holds the highest academic leadership position in a school—dean, associate dean, academic dean, dean of the faculty, academic vice president, associate rector, assistant principal, and so forth. In some schools the two areas of administrative and academic leadership are folded together into one job, but the two primary positions of leadership responsibility are distinct. In recent years leadership in ATS schools is almost always shared by two administrators—a chief executive officer and a chief academic officer. This research therefore speaks about the CEO and the CAO.
3. Barbara Brown Zikmund, "Walking the Narrow Path: Female Administrators in ATS Schools," *Theological Education* 29, no. 1 (Autumn 1992): 55–65.
4. Barbara Welter, "The Cult of True Womanhood: 1820–1860," *American Quarterly* 18, no. 2, Part 1 (Summer 1966): 151–74. There are various critiques and interpretations of this analysis, but the concept that women have a special relationship to religion is deeply embedded in American culture.
5. See my discussion of second-wave feminism in "Gender Matters: How Second-Wave Feminism Shaped and Reshaped American Religion," chapter 7 in *Faith in America: Changes, Challenges, New Directions*, ed. Charles H. Lippy (New York: Praeger, 2006), 2:129–153. A brief history of the President's Commission on the Status of Women is available at http://womenshistory.about.com/od/laws/a/status_women.htm (accessed September 21, 2009).
6. The "Royal Commission on the Status of Women in Canada" was established under Order in Council P.C. 312, February 16, 1967, under Part I of the Inquiries Act (R.S.C., 1952, c.154) and on the recommendation of the prime minister.
7. Jesse H. Ziegler, ed., "Women in Theological Education: Past, Present, and Future," *Theological Education* 8, no. 4 (Summer 1972).
8. Beverly Harrison, "An Advocate's Guide to Seminary Discussions of 'The Woman Question,'" *Theological Education* 8, no.4 (Summer 1972): 231.
9. *Ibid.*, 232.
10. Jesse H. Ziegler, editorial introduction to "Women in Theological Education: An Issue Reexamined," *Theological Education* 11, no. 2 (Winter 1975): 63.
11. "Report from the Committee on Women in Theological Education," section 5.8 in the ATS *Executive Committee* agenda book, (Vandalia, OH: The Association of Theological Schools, December 8–9, 1977), 69.
12. *Ibid.*
13. Sharon H. Ringe, "Women and the Viability of Theological Education," *Ministerial Formation* 70 (July 1995): 19–21.
14. *The American College President*, 2007 Edition, American Council on Education, Washington, DC, quoted in the *Chronicle of Higher Education*, February 16, 2007.
15. Three female Roman Catholic CEOs and five female Roman Catholic CAOs together make up 14 percent of the fifty-nine women in our sample. They are less than

2 percent of all CAOs and CEOs serving in ATS schools. One female Roman Catholic CAO is not working in a Roman Catholic school, but the remaining Roman Catholic women who are CEOs and CAOs are found in 13 percent of the fifty-three Roman Catholic schools in ATS.

16. Summary and Evaluation Analysis of WIL Retreat, March 24–25, 2007, prepared by Carol Lytch, April 3, 2007.

17. Numbers have been assigned to participants to ensure their anonymity while enabling the reader to track responses made by certain individuals.

18. Ordination is not as important for CAOs as it is for CEOs. Nearly 18 percent belong to denominations that do not ordain women (four of these are Roman Catholic women religious); 15 percent of the female CAOs are not ordained, although they could be; and 66 percent of the female CAOS are ordained. The statistics on the MDiv degree are similar. Only 59 percent of the female CAOs have an MDiv degree. Church credentials appear to be less important for leaders overseeing the academic programs of a school.

19. The thirty-five Canadian schools have sixty-six CEOs and CAOs, and eleven of them are female, slightly more than 16 percent of the top administrators in Canadian theological education. In US schools (217 schools with 434 CEOs and CAOs) the fifty-two top female administrators are 12 percent of the total.

20. G. Douglass Lewis and Lovett H. Weems Jr., *A Handbook for Seminary Presidents* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans Publishing Company, 2006), 206–219.

21. Joanna Barsh, Susie Cranston, and Geoffrey Lewis, *How Remarkable Women Lead: The Breakthrough Model for Work and Life* (New York: Crown Business Publishers, 2009).

22. Hugh Heclo, *On Thinking Institutionally* (Boulder, CO: Paradigm Publishers, 2008).

23. *Ibid.*, 6–9.

24. *Ibid.*, 2.

25. Kathy E. Ferguson, *The Feminist Case Against Bureaucracy* (Philadelphia, PA: Temple University Press, 1984).

26. Leisha DeHart-Davis, “A Feminist Argument for Bureaucracy” (paper presented at the Third Transatlantic Dialogue, University of Delaware, Newark, DE, May 31–June 2, 2007, <http://www.ipa.udel.edu/3tad/papers/workshop2/dehart-davis.pdf> (accessed April 15, 2010).

27. *Ibid.*

28. “The Tyranny of Structurelessness” by Jo Freeman was first presented at a conference in 1970. Reprinted in several places, the essay is also available at <http://www.jofreeman.com/joreen/tyranny.htm> (accessed October 15, 2009).

29. “Report from the Committee on Women in Theological Education,” section 5.8.

30. Gail Collins, *When Everything Changed: The Amazing Journey of American Women from 1960 to the Present* (New York: Little, Brown and Company, 2009).

31. *Ibid.*, 7–8.

32. Amy Bloom, “Coffee, Tea, Then Equality: A Catalog of the Evolution of Feminism in Everyday Life over the Last 50 Years,” *New York Times Book Review* (October 18, 2009), 9.

33. Barbara Finlay, *Facing the Stained Glass Ceiling: Gender in a Protestant Seminary* (Lanham, MD: University Press of America, 2003).

34. *Ibid.*, 6.

35. Charles Shelby Rooks and W. Robert Martin, Jr., *Women, the Church Maturing and Ministry with a Future* (Princeton, NJ: The Fund for Theological Education, 1972), 2. Quoted in Emily C. Hewitt, "Editorial Introduction," *Theological Education* 8, no. 4 (Summer 1972), 212.

Response to Personal Realities: Who is she? How did she get there? What does she think? How does she cope?

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My own location

In 1965 I delivered the valedictorian address to 800 high school women at Holy Names Academy in Seattle. I vividly remember urging my colleagues, the 250 women graduates, to move forward in their lives toward making the world a place of equality for women—and all people. I cited statistics from the United Nations. I noted our place of privilege as Roman Catholic laywomen who had received some of the finest education available. I urged my graduating sisters to take up the mantle of justice for women everywhere in the world.

The details of the speech fade as time collapses so many things in life. The United States was in the middle of civil rights work, escalating the Vietnam War, working toward eliminating poverty, and seeing people of faith march and work for justice across society. The Roman Catholic Church had just completed a transforming ecumenical council and had published many documents that would challenge the way Roman Catholics—and really all believers—thought about God, Christian practice, and relationships to others and the universe. I ask myself, these many years later, why did I choose to speak about and urge my colleagues to claim and fight for women's rights?

As I listened to Barbara Brown Zikmund reveal the stories of the fifty-nine women who participated in the ATS Women in Leadership study, I remembered my work dating back to 1965. In the United States, vowed religious women envisioned the education of immigrant Catholic families toward empowering them to assimilate into the US dominant white Anglo-Saxon Protestant culture. I was part of one of those families. With roots in Norway and Scotland, my Protestant and Catholic grandparents and great-grandparents found their way to the Pacific Northwest through Canada and the Dakotas. Prior to 1965, my family participated in an enclave of Roman Catholic families gathered in parish and schooled in Catholic schools. In that enclave we celebrated all of life separated from the rest of the "public." We did this to survive in what we interpreted to be an unfriendly and prejudiced environment. We fostered our identities and supported our people so they could emerge as participants in the common good, a good that included all peoples—even Catholics.

Surprisingly, these long-forgotten and buried realities surfaced when I heard Zikmund's findings about women in leadership in The Association of Theological Schools. Her first presentation of material concerned the "personal realities" of women leaders in these institutions. Her method, of simply allowing the women's stories to speak, engaged me and challenged me to ponder with her the implications of some of the findings. The opening reflections of

this response contextualize my own location; the remainder of this reflection will consider aspects of the data from this location. The response, then, will reflect on aspects of Zikmund's findings including how women came to their positions, what implications for the whole arise with women in leadership, and what kinds of scholarship and additional analysis might help ATS unpack further the rise of women in leadership in ATS institutions. All of these will be seen through the lens of my particular location and story.

Aspects of the data from my location

Zikmund introduced the study through answers women offered to personal questions. Each participant answered questions about how she was hired, how she was "called," and how she enjoyed her position. Some who were CEOs reported they were happy, loved their positions, and were glad they were not in the CAO position—the middle—trying to please both the one "above" and those "below." As a CAO, I both resonated with that comment and took exception to it. I'm not sure I experience the below so much as colleagues who depend on me to speak to the CEO and others in the university. I am called to voice positions—often not my own agenda. The middle is definitely a place that calls me to be attuned to the needs of the organization as a whole rather than to my personal research or teaching agenda. It calls me to look beyond my limited horizon.

Dissimilar jobs—similar competencies

Thus, I resonated deeply with the woman who named her training as having come from raising children. Her analysis of attending to the needs of another so completely helped me see more professionally my own choice of staying at home as a mother. I have often seen it more as a hiatus from the professional ladder that is demanding of total attention. This ladder seems more readily achievable to men and women who were not main child caretakers. Vowed religious women in the Roman Catholic tradition often moved more freely in this world due to their community support of education and their freedom from family responsibilities. She reminded me of work initiated by Mary Catherine Bateson who observed that women learn to multitask because their life circumstances force the issue.¹ I appreciated the woman leader in the ATS study who deepened this insight by naming the competencies related to attending, responding, sacrificing, and servant leadership. My own work in leadership reminded me that Robert Greenleaf named some of the same attributes as essential to servant leadership: listening, searching, responsiveness to others, awareness and perception, and ability to build trust.² Bateson and others continue to call for women's stories to inform our understanding of ourselves and our contributions. Zikmund's findings contribute to the ongoing research in this area.³

The findings considered in this topic also demonstrated how these women were invited to apply for positions, if they felt called by God, and other aspects related specifically to the positions themselves. Zikmund chose samples that seemed to resonate with women gathered around the tables at the confer-

ence, both those who had contributed through their interviews and those who were new to their positions, and therefore not personally interviewed. As I listened and later read, however, I missed the personal stories that some authors like Bateson and Daloz Parks explore for hints of leadership ability. Did items researched in other leadership studies (e.g., birth order, level or types of intelligence, previous work or life experiences) prepare these leaders for the remarkable tasks they are called to perform?

Leadership styles not gender specific

Next, I resonated with the majority response against defining female leadership as essentially different from male leadership. I know I was one of the many Zikmund quoted who nuanced and resisted categorizing women in leadership as essentially different from men in leadership. While a few quotations seemed to denigrate male leadership as differentiated from female leadership, most seemed to affirm that both men and women succeed and fail in their styles and results.

At my first ATS-sponsored Women in Leadership Conference, I was hoping to find a way to talk about women's challenges without the "male bashing" that can accompany such consideration. Happily, that conference featured Carol Becker and her emerging work on women in leadership in religious-based organizations.⁴ Through her extensive interviews and questionnaire responses, she reported that the findings could not support a specific women's style of leadership.⁵ She articulated the hazards that women encounter—and the participants at the conference agreed they had encountered and continued to face these hazards. Yet, her research could not conclusively support a specific women's leadership style. Zikmund's reporting of ATS women leaders confirms Becker's findings.

Collaborative leadership

At the same time, there seem to be some contributions women make more frequently than men. The socialization of women toward relationships certainly seems to impact women in their self-assessment. In Zikmund's study, female leaders named their ability to collaborate, to foster relationships, and to attend to people as key to their leadership styles. This theme is repeated in many studies concerning women in leadership. In his 1978 groundbreaking work on transformational leadership, James McGregor Burns alluded to the potential of female leaders toward fostering relationships and moving organizations toward mutual transformation.⁶ Becker's work in religious organizations highlighted collaboration and fostering relationships,⁷ as did my own work in leadership competencies. My research found a statistically significant difference in how men and women valued collaboration at all levels of Roman Catholic leadership, with women valuing it more highly.⁸

My own style consistently asks people to meet together to collectively participate in decision making and problem solving. Often the processes seem to take more time, and at times I would like to simply make the decisions and move on. But my experience has taught me, and most of the women leaders interviewed agree, to trust these processes and to value the support of

the whole when the collective decisions are made. Indeed, according to many leadership studies, the definitions of leadership and the value of collaboration are moving toward “methods and techniques women [bring] to the table—collaboration, communication, and consensus. . . . Gender-neutral concepts such as mission-driven and values-based management with clear benchmarks and metrics for impact . . . [have begun] to replace the idea of an all-powerful boss who knew all the answers.”⁹

Female leadership in theological education

Finally, I want to consider a finding that practically knocked me off my chair. When Zikmund and Sharon Miller, of the Center for the Study of Theological Education at Auburn Theological Seminary, presented statistics, they offered few new insights. Yet, those few call for further reflection from my social location.

First, they noted that women constitute approximately 12 percent of the potential leadership of ATS schools. Given the forty-four years since my challenge to high school women graduates, this figure seems appallingly low. What seems both worse and more comforting, these figures more than quintuple the 2.4 percent presence of women CEO leaders in Fortune 500 companies!¹⁰ More appalling is the Duke University finding reported in the *New York Times*, revealing that women pastor only 3 percent of the largest mainline Protestant congregations.¹¹ When we ask ourselves, have the grants and support and intentional work of ATS paid any dividends, I think we can say “yes—and.” In other words, we are addressing millennia of oppression, and this work will take a long time of concerted effort to make the kind of sea change we envision. Linda Tarr-Whelan cited the Beijing Platform for Action as having identified a goal of achieving 30 percent women in leadership positions.¹² While many countries immediately acted upon this goal, the United States remains thirty-fourth (behind Afghanistan!) in reaching this tipping point. Thus, while 12 percent is a far cry from the 30 percent tipping point, theological education in the United States is leading the country, particularly in the mainline Protestant leadership, which the study documented as being 27 percent female at this time.

More personally shocking, however, were the statistics related to evangelical and Roman Catholic institutions. In both of these, the percentages of women leaders were far more discouraging. Indeed, Roman Catholic institutions, like mine, boast fewer than 10 percent female leaders. And the shock for me is that I am the *only* laywoman who is either CEO or CAO in any institution accredited by ATS. While the Roman Catholic Church officially considers vowed women religious as “lay,” lived reality contradicts this. Religious communities have sought higher education and filled positions of leadership in organizations they founded for a number of decades. This has promoted them in a hierarchical organization in ways that have been slower to open to “ordinary” laypeople. One vowed religious leader’s comments reflected this movement and the freedom it offered her. At the same time, vowed religious women have consistently opened opportunity for laypeople. I am a recipient of their generative leadership.

When I addressed my classmates in 1965, I was already a full-fledged feminist educated for twelve years by mostly vowed religious women. At seventeen years of age I knew I would fight for women's rights and power until we were able to be at the table with others in full authority and power. I entered a vowed religious order, and my formation during the three years I stayed radicalized my Christian belief, formed in me a personal relationship to Jesus, and encouraged a belief in acting as if the reign of God is now. The documents of Vatican II formed my understanding of what it is to be Roman Catholic—and more importantly, catholic. Degrees in theatre, pursued after leaving the religious order, built on my theological and spiritual formation and prepared me to challenge the status quo.

While I seemingly constitute a pool of one, I claim a community of tens of thousands. Since 1965 when the highest number of "vocations" to ordained priesthood and vowed religious life was recorded in the United States,¹³ the number of lay ecclesial ministers has risen proportionately to the decline of ordained priests and vowed religious.¹⁴ The founding of programs such as those located within the School of Theology and Ministry at Seattle University and the other seventy Roman Catholic programs dedicated to preparing lay ecclesial ministers prepared a pool of leaders for the Roman Catholic Church in the United States. As of 2005, more than 32,000 lay ecclesial ministers served in some 18,000 parishes in the United States.¹⁵ More than 80 percent of these are women!¹⁶ According to 2008 CARA figures, approximately 3,100 men are preparing for ordained ministry in US seminaries. At the same time, 5,520 lay students are enrolled in graduate studies. Of these, 64 percent are laywomen (3,533), a figure that exceeds the men in seminary.¹⁷ Thus, as ordained and vowed religious numbers decline, thousands of laymen and mostly laywomen are preparing to take their places of leadership. The pipeline is adequate to the task.

In 2000, the first laywoman serving as a leader in an ATS accredited Catholic institution retired from our university.¹⁸ I am proud and humbled to have been a CAO with her as CEO. It seems now more remarkable than it did at that time, that the two of us would be the only Roman Catholic lay leaders in ATS accredited schools. Her retirement leaves me alone. Like others in Zikmund's study, I feel anew the weight of being the only one. How do I share this burden?

Effective leadership

As the eldest child of eight, I have no memory of ever being alone. From the time I was two, I have been required to teach others. As a female leader, I embrace the charge of mentoring the next generation, encouraging others to choose this life, and planning my own succession. I am called to nurture the leaders of tomorrow: male and female together. I embrace the definition of effective leadership as articulated by Lorraine Matusak: "Leadership . . . means leaving a mark. It means initiating and guiding and working with a group to accomplish change. Leadership is a social role—not a mere personality trait. By ideas, encouragement, and deeds, leaders show the way and influence the behavior of others."¹⁹ As Matusak further articulates and the women in this study confirm, "good leadership education is not simply about the skills nec-

essary to manipulate the external world. It is about the personal discipline of the inner self as well. We must possess that inner strength before we can transcend our own personal boundaries to support and serve others."²⁰ I am convinced with her that women and men need the combination of inner strength and effective leadership skills to assist ATS-related organizations in this time of rapid change and chaos.

While Zikmund reported that some studies have determined that women don't take as many risks, the women in the ATS study refute this assessment. As Matusak argues, "Risk taking is an indispensable part of leadership . . . [Leaders] have the courage to try new ways, even when the going looks tough and they are not sure of the outcome."²¹ Since women are new leaders in almost all venues, including theological institutions, I argue with Matusak that female leaders by definition must be risk takers. "Leaders are courageous people. They don't waste much time worrying about what other people might think of them; they are more concerned about doing what is right and effective. They make every attempt to weave a shared vision, to align others toward a goal, and then with enthusiasm, energy, and commitment they are willing to walk near the edge and even do things that raise the eyebrows of those around them if needed to achieve the goal—to get the job done!"²²

If mainline Protestant institutions accredited by ATS already approach the 30 percent tipping point for women in leadership positions; if the pipeline for women in theological doctoral studies is already 30 percent and holding; if Roman Catholic women already equal or exceed the total number of men educating themselves as leaders in the Church; then ATS is approaching a position of prophecy. As new generations of faculty and ordained ministers consider their options, their poetic imagination is being formed symbolically and incarnationally through current female leaders in all the religious institutions. As Walter Brueggemann observed, "the work of poetic imagination holds the potential of unleashing a community of power and action that finally will not be contained by any imperial restrictions and definitions of reality."²³ I thank ATS, Barbara Brown Zikmund, and all involved in this study for daring me to embrace this challenge.

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ENDNOTES

1. Mary Catherine Bateson, *Composing a Life* (New York: Penguin, Ltd., 1990), 141–142.
2. Robert K. Greenleaf, *Servant Leadership* (New York: Paulist Press, 1977), 21.
3. I think specifically of the material related to women in theological institutions including but not limited to the work of Carol Becker, Lorraine Matusak, Patricia Killen, and Sharon Daloz Parks.
4. Carol Becker, *Leading Women. How Church Women Can Avoid Leadership Traps and Negotiate the Gender Maze* (Nashville, TN: Abingdon Press, 1996), 45.
5. *Ibid.*, 53.
6. James MacGregor Burns, *Leadership* (New York: Harper & Row, 1977), 50.

7. Becker, *Leading Women*, 39.
8. Sharon Henderson Callahan, *A Delphi Study of Competencies Needed by Leaders of Roman Catholic Faith Communities in Western Washington Through the Year 2000* (EdD dissertation, Seattle University, 1996. Ann Arbor: UMI, 1996), 280.
9. Linda Tarr-Whelan, *Women Lead the Way: Your Guide to Stepping Up to Leadership and Changing the World* (San Francisco: Berrett-Koehler Publishers, 2009), 77.
10. *Ibid.*, 16.
11. *Ibid.*, 34.
12. *Ibid.*, 28.
13. Frequently Requested Catholic Church Statistics, <http://cara.georgetown.edu/bulletin/index.htm> (accessed December 31, 2009).
14. CARA does not include lay ministers in its "Frequently Requested Statistics" charts posted on the website. Analysis of lay ecclesial ministers requires study of the Murnion and De Lambo reports published by National Pastoral Life Center in 1992, 1999, and 2005.
15. Mary L. Gautier, *Catholic Ministry Formation Directory* (Center for Applied Research in the Apostolate [CARA]: Georgetown University, 2009), <http://cara.georgetown.edu/pubs>, PDF format, 35 (accessed December 31, 2009).
16. David DeLambo et al., *Lay Parish Ministers* (New York: National Pastoral Life Center, 2005) building on previously published studies: Philip J. Murnion and David DeLambo, *Parishes and Parish Ministers: A Study of Parish Lay Ministry* (New York: National Pastoral Life Center, 1999), and Philip J. Murnion with David DeLambo, *New Parish Ministers* (New York: National Pastoral Life Center, 1992), v. These studies charted the growth of lay ecclesial ministry from 20,000 ministers to 32,000+. In the 1992 study, the ratio was 85 percent women.
17. Gautier, *Catholic Ministry*, 32.
18. Loretta Jancoski, Dean Emerita, Seattle University, retired in June 2000. She served from 1996–2000.
19. Lorraine R. Matusak, *Finding Your Voice, Learning to Lead . . . Anywhere You Want to Make a Difference* (San Francisco: Jossey-Bass, 1997), 5.
20. *Ibid.*, 35.
21. *Ibid.*, 106.
22. *Ibid.*, 112.
23. Walter Brueggemann, *Hopeful Imagination: Prophetic Voices in Exile* (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1986), 96.

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Better than Gold: Reflections on Section Two: Professional Relationships and Institutional Factors

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Introduction: Miss Frances tosses a coin

“I’m glad I’m not young and vulnerable anymore,” sighs Frances, a venerable thirty-eight-year-old, as she watches her twenty-something roommates fall into precarious romantic Roman liaisons. “Miss Frances,” as the film credits describe her, is the American woman who tosses the second coin into the Trevi Fountain in the early scenes of Jean Negulesco’s film *Three Coins in the Fountain*. Competent and efficient, Frances has spent fifteen years in Rome working as the personal assistant to a celebrated, if personally difficult, American author. Since the film dates to 1954, Frances must have arrived in Rome before the Second World War and presumably endured its anguish and heartbreak on Italian soil.

But that is in the unmentioned past. Rome is now a many-splendored treat, according to Hollywood—an inviting pastiche of cobbled streets, elegant staircases, dramatic ruins, and of course, spectacular gravity-driven stone and marble fountains, cascading from the surrounding Italian hill country. Rome is also now available to young American women, thanks to a liberating postwar ethic that encourages single women to travel and work abroad and a favourable exchange rate that affords a comfortable lifestyle in exotic European locales.

Barbara Brown Zikmund’s second section focuses on the relationships and responsibilities that women experience in positions of theological leadership. “How is she doing?” Zikmund asks. Frances, tosser of the second coin, turns out to be emblematic of the women Zikmund encountered in her research: capable and resourceful, bristling with competence. Like Frances, we meet in the research women who have overcome personal and institutional obstacles, women who have met and tamed their vulnerabilities. As one of the research study interviewers, I marvelled at the competence of these women as they described their work and worlds to me. Each of them exuded joy in the task: not that it is easy, but that it is invigorating. They are rising to the challenge and meeting it with faith, imagination, and skill. As Barbara Brown Zikmund puts it, “the interviews with these women are inspiring.”

How does one respond to such an affirmation of capability? In the film *Three Coins*, we learn that Frances is not as invulnerable as she asserts, and I will return to that analogy later in my reflections. However, I would first like to explore a little of what I heard in the women’s stories. To stay with the images of the film, it seems to me that these women are not unlike the coins themselves that are flung into the fountain: substantial, iconic, resilient. Using the coin as a metaphor, I will explore these three intersecting aspects of Section Two.

Coins splash, ripple, and settle

My church denomination, the United Church of Canada, began ordaining women in 1936. When I began my pastoral ministry in rural Newfoundland and Labrador in the mid-1980s, however, there were only two ordained and four “lay supply” women working in the province’s ninety United Church pastoral charges. I was the first ordained woman to serve the congregations of my pastoral charge. The church’s national moderator at the time, a laywoman, expressed concern for us and, in her visit to our region, called us together to see how we were faring. “What is your biggest challenge?” she asked. My colleagues spoke with feeling and frustration about the burden of attempting, within their full workloads . . . to keep their houses clean. The moderator was taken aback. She no doubt expected us to describe the struggle for legitimacy in a culture where gender roles had been rigidly defined for centuries. And that challenge of course was there, plaited into our daily work and witness. But we were labourers in the vineyard, and gender negotiations were one part of the effort to be effective in ministry. The housework, however, was simply oppressive!

Many women in theological education leadership tell a similar story. They face “gender stuff,” as one of them puts it, but they have developed strategies for handling it: with the educational skills they honed during years in the classroom, with political savvy, with humour. A woman in my discussion group at the research summit described leadership as a kaleidoscope: paying attention to many pieces at one time. When one is called to lead, the goal is to make it come together, to make it work. And these smart insightful women do just that.

A tossed coin attracts attention. It arcs through the fountain spray; it hits the water with a splash. But then it sinks to the fountain floor and settles there among the other coins. A woman who takes on a senior leadership role at a theological school makes a splash. She attracts the notice of the academy and the church. A woman! The first woman to. . . . We scrutinize her photo and biographical blurb in the *In Trust* magazine. How did she get there? How will she handle it? Her initial leadership decisions create ripples, as power is reoriented, displaced, reconceived. But then, for many female leaders, life settles—not into dull conformity, but into situations that can be anticipated and addressed. “The thing that surprised me the most in this position—and perhaps would surprise my mother,” said one president at the research summit, “is how many thank-you cards I write.”

Each coin in a fountain has a story attached—a hope and a yearning that it carries quietly to the bottom of the pool. Each woman in the leadership of a theological school brings to the task a narrative full of struggle and serendipity. But the research tells us that the skills that got her there are the ones that allow her to work through hostility and resistance, so that her splash becomes a series of ripples, which most often, eventually, settle into equilibrium—not acquiescence, but a model of living and working that gives women and their institutions life and hope.

Coins are iconic

Canadians are famously uncertain or ambivalent about their national identity. Their monetary currency, however, manages to be more forthright. Canadian coins feature, on their reverse, a maple leaf, a beaver, a famous schooner, a caribou, a loon, and a polar bear. Many Canadians have never or rarely seen these objects and animals in real life, but still recognize them as “ours.” Coins tell us who we are intended to be. As we go about our daily lives, handing over these metal disks in exchange for cups of coffee and newspapers, they quietly reassert that assigned national character in our trading relationships.

Senior female leaders play a similar role in theological institutions. They are symbols of authority and theological warrant. By their very presence they signal both an inward vocation and the outward call of the church to this ministry. Some of the interviewees spoke about this symbolism and its power, particularly as they become role models and mentors to female students. And while this modeling is important, I believe the iconic role goes deeper.

From early 2006 to mid-2009, the theological school in which I teach had as its president a woman in her early seventies. She is a farmer and a long-time church volunteer who knows the institutional church like the back of her hand. She is deeply committed to the ministry internship partnership my school shares with the denomination. Her only academic degree is an honorary doctorate—bestowed by this same school more than a decade ago in recognition of her strong lay leadership.

Our farming president was inspiring and competent. And she was an icon, not only for students and others in the school but also for the wider constituency. She represented all that we admire in the iconic Canadian farmwoman: practicality, calm in a crisis, an ability to cope with financial exigency, and the expectation that everyone will pitch in to make it work. (She also baked very fine brownies and gingersnaps for us all.) Anyone who wanted to imagine the school as an ivory tower of out-of-touch academics had to reckon with this symbol of earthy common sense. Like a true icon, she helped to mediate the holiness of the theological enterprise in profound and unexpected ways.

Women in theological education leadership break old moulds; they force the minting of new coins, new ways to claim the identity of Christian leadership, simply by being there. Their daily interaction with students, staff, board members, and other stakeholders reinforces this identity shift.

Of course, new coins can be disconcerting for those who are invested in the currency of the status quo. In 2004, the Royal Canadian Mint produced the new Poppy coin, a twenty-five cent piece dedicated to the memory of Canada’s war dead. It featured a stylized poppy, Canada’s flower of remembrance, emblazoned in vivid red on silver-coloured nickel. According to the mint’s historians, when American defence contractors first saw the poppy coin in 2007, they examined the coin’s security features and concluded that it was a spy coin, its protective coating being used to hide a surveillance device.¹ Women as icons of Christian authority can cause similar anxiety, which is perhaps one reason that women in senior leadership are still in the minority across ATS schools.

Coins are resilient

Coins have been used as a standardised form of value for nearly three thousand years. Archaeologists, therefore, rely on coins to help date and describe most of the civilizations they uncover. Long after the other bits of a society's fabric have crumbled and decomposed, coins remain, revealing a little of a world that once was. Barbara Brown Zikmund's research revealed a similar hardiness among female leaders in theological education. In fact, their resilience puzzled some of the women who gathered to hear and reflect on the research—most of whom were the very women who had been interviewed for the project. "The data seemed benign. Where was the explosiveness?" some of them asked.

Zikmund and others reminded the group that these interviews represented the voices of the "survivors," those who learned to negotiate the complex terrain of church and academic politics, overlaid with issues of patriarchy, race, and class. These are the women whose coins escaped the corrosive effects of theologies that deny women's Christian leadership vocations. These are the women whose coins were not placed on the railway track to be flattened by the locomotive power of centuries of wealthy white male hegemony. In some ways, the women of these interviews are the lucky coins: the *drachma* diligently sought by the parabolic woman sweeping her house; the two *lepta* lovingly dropped into the temple treasury by the poverty-stricken widow. So, yes, these women represent a privileged social location. Yet I found myself feeling impatient with the complaint that somehow the interviews misrepresented women's senior leadership experiences. These resilient women, these fortunate coins, have also demonstrated courage and fortitude in staying with—and relishing—the task, even at its most difficult.

One of the intentions of *Three Coins in the Fountain*, according to film historian Jeanine Basinger, was to make a "women's picture"—a film that would appeal to the young women of the 1950s by showing them a lush but attainable world of travel to places not only beautiful but also sexually a little freer than in postwar North America.² "You've never lived until you've loved in Rome!" was the movie's tag line. One of the intentions of *ATS*, as I understand it, is to support and encourage women to seek and sustain senior leadership roles in theological education, to seduce them not with scenery and sensuality—we met in a Pittsburgh airport hotel, remember—but with the possibility and promise of such leadership. ("You've never lived until you've led a seminary!") I tasted that possibility during this research. I heard the deep satisfaction in the voices of the women I interviewed, even though some were tired and some were harried. Such leadership may or may not become my vocation, but in the course of this research project, I discovered, for the first time since I entered theological education, that I could imagine myself into the role. The resilient strength of the women I encountered helped to take me there.

Conclusion: Better than gold

As the plot of *Three Coins* unfolds, we begin to see the tender, indeed heart-wrenching side of Frances, the capable executive assistant. She is secretly in love with her boss, author John Shadwell, who admires her competence but seems indifferent to her feelings. Through a series of comic yet poignant mishaps, Frances, played by the “elegant, skilled” Dorothy McGuire,³ ends up engaged to marry Shadwell. Her fiancé, alas, may have only one year left to live, but this does not daunt Miss Frances. In the final scene, the Trevi Fountain, which had been shut off and dried up for cleaning, gushes to life once more. The lovers whirl and the sunlight dances on the spray as the final credits roll.

One year to live. Almost all of us who are engaged in North American theological education face the threat of the demise of our schools. Even the most august institutions are not immune to the vagaries of sliding investment markets, declining church membership, society’s depressing anti-intellectualism, decreasing ministry vocations. Yet, as Barbara Brown Zikmund discovered, the women who have offered themselves for leadership in these schools are not fickle. They “think institutionally,” which means every fibre of their being is engaged in the imaginative, heart-wrenching work of making theological education viable and effective.

Are these women fools? Do they cling to a dying patriarchal church when they could be setting off on some fresh and unencumbered adventure? If I were more incisive and detached, I might be able to craft a response to these serious questions. But I am afraid I have been swept up in the whirl of the salvation drama for too long. In his closing remarks to the research summit, ATS Executive Director Daniel Aleshire noted: “This will be the hardest job you will ever love.” I have a vague idea why Frances loves her difficult author. I have a better sense of why so many of us love Jesus’s church, despite its diagnosis, regardless of its prognosis. “Happy are those who find wisdom, and those who get understanding, for her income is better than silver, and her revenue better than gold,” says the sage (Proverbs 3:13–14 NRSV). Holy Wisdom: what better name for the coin we in theological education have set out to seek, to find, to be. And the fellow-travellers I met in the process of this Women in Leadership study have beckoned me to walk a mile farther on that journey.

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ENDNOTES

1. See the teachers’ section of <http://www.mint.ca/store/mint/learn/history-time-line-4000020> (accessed December 6, 2009).
2. Jeanine Basinger provides an audio commentary on the DVD version of the film *Three Coins in the Fountain* (Fox, 2004).
3. As described by Jeanine Basinger in the audio commentary for the DVD version of the film.

Systemic Challenges: One Dean's Response

Anne B. Yardley

Drew University Theological School

As I headed through the hotel hallways to the Women in Leadership Research Summit, I approached the registration table in a state of both anticipation and exhaustion. It was the middle of the fall semester, and we had just completed our three-day annual alumni/ae lecture series at Drew University. I had already met with three other female deans for lunch, renewing friendships forged at other ATS gatherings. I anticipated that the summit, focused on research about those of us in attendance, would offer me an excellent opportunity to reflect on my own work as dean in light of the experiences of my peers.

I attended my first ATS meeting in March 2001, three months before becoming the associate academic dean at Drew University Theological School. The luncheon for new deans at the Chief Academic Officers Society (CAOS) meeting encouraged us to consider administration as a vocation and helped to set a framework for my own understanding of this new role. Within the next fifteen months, I would also attend my first Senior Women Administrators retreat and my first ATS Biennial Meeting. From these initial experiences, I shaped an understanding of the different types of ATS resources and support offered to CAOs, and I have continued to make use of them. By my count, I've been to seven CAOS meetings, six women's retreats, and four Biennial Meetings in addition to participating on the evaluation team for five accreditation visits. I've had moments of both great frustration and significant insights and lots of experiences in between these two extremes. So I write these reflections from the perspective that the institutional structures of ATS can play an important role in supporting women in leadership.

I also write as a white, mainline Protestant (Episcopalian) serving in a diverse mainline (United Methodist) university-related seminary working for a female CEO. These factors all suggest—correctly—that my own experiences as an administrator have been in a largely supportive environment. Nor am I the first woman to serve in the CAO role in my institution. All of these aspects impact my own reactions to the research and my observations on the research section titled Systemic Challenges.

Barbara Brown Zikmund's discussion of systemic challenges has elicited three main areas of response:

- the role of institutional structures in either encouraging or discouraging women's leadership;
- the importance of finding appropriate models or images for women in leadership; and
- the potential for ATS to continue to support women's leadership.

Institutional structures

Theological schools generally operate within a circle of overlapping and sometimes competing structures. The school itself has a structure, often influenced by external ecclesiastical and theological structures. University-related schools also exist with the larger university structure. All of our institutions are affected to some degree by the cultural mores of our time and our geographical locations. Zikmund presents various feminist analyses of structure and focuses on an essay that suggests that clearly articulated structures may, in fact, support those who are not in power because of the ability of clear structures to level the playing field.¹ My own experience would support the view that clearly articulated procedures help make visible many of the otherwise invisible assumptions that the “in” group may know but others may not. While Zikmund takes the conversation in the direction of defining the importance of faith in theological leadership, I believe that women in theological education often need more tutelage on the analysis of the basic organizational structures and procedures in their environment. Both male and female academics who transition into academic administration could benefit from a better understanding of how to assess the overlapping structures in which they operate. Perhaps those who become administrators out of a church background have some advantage here, but even they could use assistance. ATS could help incoming CEOs and CAOs by offering a well-chosen reading list of helpful books on this topic.

Within the context of theological education, an understanding and analysis of the impact of ecclesiastical structures can help to paint a far more nuanced picture of women in leadership. Daniel Aleshire, in his concluding remarks at the retreat, talked about the three broad ecclesial families composing ATS member schools—Roman Catholic, evangelical Protestant, and mainline Protestant. He suggested that they carry very different approaches to women in leadership—cultural issues in the mainline schools, ecclesial issues in the Roman Catholic schools, and theological issues in the evangelical schools. ATS and its member schools have worked hard to create a climate in which these schools can identify shared goals while respecting major differences. The issue of women's leadership has the potential for disrupting this balance. To discuss women in leadership without recognizing the different challenges faced in each group, however, risks being simplistic and nonproductive. I would have liked to have heard more about the results within each ecclesial family, but given the small numbers of Roman Catholic and evangelical women in the sample, that might not have been possible while still preserving anonymity.

Mainline schools account for about 40 percent of ATS member schools but for 85 percent of the female CEOs represented in the survey. It would be simplistic to set similar goals across the schools yet, in my view, inappropriate to ignore the percentages in the Roman Catholic and evangelical families. I would challenge member schools to talk more openly about the role of women in theological education, specifically in leadership roles. Both US and Canadian cultural ideologies push us toward more inclusivity of women in leadership roles but do not necessarily make space for change to happen. The ATS

Women in Leadership group may want to consider looking at programming that specifically targets subgroups within the membership. In Zikmund's closing recommendations, she specifically suggests ways in which ATS can move to support women in evangelical and Roman Catholic schools more effectively, even if they are not in CAO or CEO positions. I would agree that this is an important direction for future programming.

Images, models, and metaphors

In this section of her report, Zikmund shares with us the answers to the questions, "Are there theological or biblical images of leadership that guide you in your work?" and "What are they?" As Zikmund so effectively does throughout her report, she shares a number of specific quotes from the survey participants in this section. I find myself thinking, "Why hasn't that image ever occurred to me?" and "That really does not work for me." In aggregate, it is a very helpful section of the report and will be an important resource as women move forward. It also, however, points to the real lack of female role models for women entering administrative positions. Indeed, the images I resonate with most strongly are of concepts, not actual people. Such phrases as "you shall be called rebuilders of walls, restorers of houses in ruin," "equip the saints for ministry," and "scattering seeds" offer some creative and flexible images that might allow women from various theological positions to find themselves sharing ideas.

As I reflect on this section of the research, I would like to see these images divided between the CEOs and CAOs since some major differences exist between the two jobs. I would be very curious as to the ways in which those differences are reflected in the participants' metaphors and images. Further, I think that the question of our own images for leadership needs to be forged in the context of our images for theological education. How do we understand the entire enterprise of theological education? Where do we then see our role within that?

When my CEO, Maxine Beach, was installed nearly a decade ago, she used the image of theological education as a feast, as a table where all were invited and where all would find some of their own food as well as food from a variety of other people. Out of that image grew my own understanding of my role as the steward who is responsible for making sure that the right food gets to the table, well-prepared and fresh, that the right people are at the table to eat, and that everyone's focus can be on the experience of eating, not on worrying about getting there and getting things organized. While this image does not cover all aspects of my job, it has continued to serve me in my understanding of my role. I'm not the host of the banquet—that would be Maxine's role—but I am responsible for the details, for suggesting appropriate dishes and so forth. This image captures many things about our particular situation and especially the emphasis on developing new pedagogies reflecting our racial/ethnic diversity. It also captures some of what I feel the faculty needs in the way of organizational support for its teaching and research.

Inviting leaders to work with images for their schools and their own roles within them has the potential for helping each person focus on the most important aspects of the job and also to open spaces for creative, artistic responses to this work. If, as Zikmund suggests, we need to improve the image of the job itself by sharing our joy in the work, sharing the images we use might be one way to communicate that joy to a wider constituency.

What should ATS do?

In Sharon Miller's presentation of the research done by Auburn Theological Seminary, she commented that she was "surprised by how much the profiles overlapped between men and women." Much of Zikmund's research—although it deals only with women—fails to show any clear-cut differences in the leadership styles of and issues for men and women. And yet the research still shows that women are underrepresented in leadership roles in theological education, even if one sets a figure of 33 percent (the percentage of women in the PhD pipeline) as a target rather than a 50 percent target. Within this framework, it seems reasonable to ask if ATS should be sponsoring events for all women—not just those already in leadership—and, if so, what the focus of such events should be.

Zikmund has offered five main recommendations in her closing remarks. In many ways, I find this the most helpful part of the presentation, because they represent some very important ideas, many of them equally useful for improving the lives of both male and female CEOs and CAOs. I would think that improving the overall image of leadership through celebrating service anniversaries, encouraging CEOs and CAOs to talk positively about their work, and cultivating a more overt theology of leadership would benefit men and women alike. It would not necessarily, however, raise the profile of administration among faculty members, the major source for new CEOs and CAOs.

Zikmund alludes to the paucity of racial/ethnic women among the sample but does not offer much in the way of specific suggestions of how to move forward on this issue. Having been privileged to attend the installations of the first two African American women to head ATS schools (Leah Gaskin Fitchue and Marsha Foster Boyd), I have a sense of the importance of increasing these numbers and an immense admiration for both of these women. I would recommend a mentoring program that worked with graduates of other specific programs—the FTE Racial/Ethnic PhD/ThD Scholars program, the Hispanic Theological Initiative, the United Methodist Women of Color program, and other such programs—that have already identified women with immense promise. An ATS initiative to bring together graduates of these programs who teach in member schools and elsewhere might yield some new strategies for increasing the number of racial/ethnic women in administrative roles as well. I know that at least one woman spoke about her desire to remain a faculty person so that she could clearly place her efforts behind supporting those of her ethnic group. She reasoned that as an administrator, she would have to care for all groups of people. I applaud her sense of calling, but I also know that other women may strategize that such a leadership position brings an important visibility with it.

I think that the results of this research project should encourage ATS to continue to support female CAOs and CEOs. Although most women would not argue that there are essential differences between the ways men and women lead, most also indicate that gender barriers are still very real and often very discouraging. The opportunity to network with other women within ATS has been crucial to my own work and key to making the entire landscape of theological education more approachable. Finding ways to support female faculty as well as administrators (perhaps regionally?) could improve the climate as well.

The current revision of the accrediting standards also offers ATS an opportunity to put stronger statements in place on gender issues and gives WIL the opportunity to lead in this regard. Female CEOs and CAOs have some real responsibility to push for these changes. Even the ensuing discussions will be good for theological education.

Further research

As we seek to mentor more women into considering leadership positions, I would like to see more research on when in a person's career the optimal time would be to make a move from the faculty to administration. Intuitively, it seems to me that it is much better if the faculty person has tenure and has already established a scholarly reputation. Otherwise, a change to administration may short-circuit the scholarly aspect of a person's career. I know women who have become CAOs while still untenured but in a tenure track position. While they have succeeded in getting tenure, it has placed an inordinate amount of pressure on them in the process. The questions in this research study did not elicit information about an optimal time to make this career move, but follow-up studies could look more closely at this issue. Perhaps a roundtable in alternate years for female faculty in ATS schools who have recently received tenure would be a valuable place to offer mentoring rather than the more scattershot approach of the fall conference that ATS has hosted.

I would also be interested in seeing the differences between the career paths of CEOs and CAOs explored more fully. From the Auburn data we learned that only 67 percent of female CEOs and 74 percent of male CEOs have PhD degrees, whereas 92 percent of female CAOs and 88 percent of male CAOs have PhDs. More exploration of these differences would be very helpful. It would certainly appear that more CEOs come from the church (and potentially hold DMin degrees), a trajectory generally overlooked when encouraging more women to become CEOs. In addition to encouraging faculty in ATS schools to consider moving to administration, do we also need to talk with women who lead larger churches? Encourage them to get a doctorate? What would effective strategies look like?

Conclusions

I appreciate the opportunity to be part of this research and to offer my reflections here. I hope that this volume itself will be an encouragement to

women who are just beginning their times in administration in ATS schools. My own years as a CAO have been full of tremendous satisfaction and joy. I hope that this research will help many other women to find it so.

Anne B. Yardley is associate academic dean at Drew University Theological School.

ENDNOTE

1. Leisha DeHart-Davis, "A Feminist Argument for Bureaucracy," (paper presented at the Third Transatlantic Dialogue, University of Delaware, Newark, Delaware, May 31–June 2, 2007).

A Tragedy of Women's Leadership in Theological Education

Michelle Sungshin Lim

Institute for Education and Transformation

Introduction

My mentor¹ not only introduced me to the ATS Women in Leadership program, but she also strongly urged me to attend its annual conferences, which I have always looked forward to. I am a woman of Asian descent and have held simultaneously both faculty and administrative positions for four years and most recently have served as a faculty member. Attending this research summit as an observer is helping me discern whether entering into a leadership position within a theological education context is, in fact, a calling from God.

Listening to Zikmund's report at the research summit reminded me of tragic scene in opera with three acts. Thus, I shall refer to my reflections as "A Tragedy of Women's Leadership in Theological Education."

Act I: Racism and sexism

First, I was impressed during conference introductions with how many women held leadership positions. Among these forty-two female presidents and academic deans² were four African American women and two Latino women. To my disbelief, however, only one female of Asian descent held the position of president, and none were academic deans. Overall, Zikmund's research revealed that only two African American women and one Asian American woman hold the office of president. I was reminded that both racism and gender issues may be more ingrained in the field of theological education than I had previously assumed. These oppressive issues have been used as a double-edged sword³ that hinders—if not prevents—women of color, especially those of Asian descent, from vying for leadership positions in theological schools. Perhaps another presupposed hindrance for Asian American women in leadership has been that they have been told from birth to be modest and self-effacing, both preeminent virtues of Asian character that have been unconsciously and detrimentally, for the most part, embedded into the mindset of Asian American women. Such mindsets stand in marked contrast to the more assertive role of women in Western culture, where self-aggrandizement and autonomy are perceived as virtues toward greater self-expression beholden to "active voice."

Second, some theological beliefs and denominational ideologies among the three broad ecclesial families (mainline Protestant, evangelical Protestant, and Roman Catholic/Orthodox) of ATS member schools may have critically contributed to the current landscape of women in leadership. For example,

according to Zikmund’s study, no female presidents (CEO hereafter) headed either evangelical schools or Roman Catholic schools that prepare priests for ministry⁴ among the 252 member schools, though the overall number of female CEOs and CAOs is increasing. I have no doubt that these data denote and implicate the practice of sexism in theological schools, especially in the realm of leadership posts. The rationale for the prejudice is based on Scriptures such as I Corinthians 14:33–34 and I Timothy 2:11–15. John A. McGuckin, a renowned patristic scholar, admonishes this practice by quoting St. Gregory the Theologian: “Obviously, the law was made by men, and I do not accept this law. I cannot prove this custom. Such a law cannot reflect the God who is equitably even-handed to all.”⁵

Act II: Jealousy

“Resistance to women leadership” and “resistance of other women” drew my attention during this particular presentation not only because I have experienced resistance during my short academic career but also because these women’s experiences remind me of Robert Frost’s poem “The Road Not Taken.” I felt the pains and the sorrows and the anticipation for the unknown futures in the theological education of these respected women leaders who have walked the road less taken by choice or simply by being at the right time at the right place. The choices these women made in their career paths have twofold significance.

First is the exercise of their freedom and courage in the face of structures of oppression and all its difficulties. These difficulties might have been the lack of support from institutions where they work—surprisingly from other female faculty members or staff personnel—sacrifice of family life, lack of ongoing training, diminished resources, and so forth. Moreover, some of these women in leadership positions made contributions toward transforming the ethos of their institutions against the prevailing male hierarchical structure of dominance in order to foster shared governance and an atmosphere of nurturing and caring—the kitchen table ethos.⁶

Second, these female leaders have opened the space to allow “Others” to have a chance to compete for the top leadership positions, although the number of women “in the corner office” still lags far behind that in the secular workplace. Likewise, women in the secular world are no better off in comparison to their male professional counterparts. For instance, the percentage of women in leadership roles (combination of CEO and CAO) in theological schools is about 6 percent⁷ compared to 11 percent in the professional fields in law, medicine, and Fortune 500 companies.⁸

Table 1 Percentage of workers in top jobs

	Men	Women
Lawyers (partner)	84.4%	15.6%
Corporate officers in the Fortune 500	84.3%	15.7%
Top-earning doctors	93.4%	6.6%

Robert Frost concludes in the poem,

and I—I took the one less traveled by,
And that has made all the difference.⁹

Act III: Hope

I would like to start with a quote by Albert Einstein, using a metaphor for power and structural relationship between CEOs and CAOs, including ecclesiastical leaders, faculty members, and boards.

To me the worst thing seems to be a school principally to work with methods of fear, force, and artificial authority. Such treatment destroys the sound sentiments, the sincerity, and the self-confidence of pupils. . . .¹⁰

The way to “radical inclusion,” not solely limited to women but inclusive of “Others” in the landscape of leadership in the realm of theological education, to me, is to deconstruct the intrinsic, patriarchic infrastructure of its institutions. What is meant by deconstruction of patriarchic governance is not simply gender-change within the leadership position but reorientation of leadership as we know it. For instance, women ironically have the tendency to be just as oppressive as men—or even more so—in their governance and administrative style vis-à-vis other women.¹¹ Women in leadership positions should have put forth every effort and leveraged their hard-earned status to deconstruct the long-standing patriarchic structure and (re)construct a landscape of corner offices for other women.

It is essential, in my opinion, for women to once again take the lead as harbingers, endeavoring to create and establish a third space—a space of equity and fairness—within the theological education edifice. As theological educators, we must maintain integrity and practice justice not only in the present but also for future theological educators. We need to take another progressive step toward cultivating a greater human capacity in promoting care, empathy, heightened consciousness, and creativity for better representation.

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ENDNOTES

1. Formerly a senior administrator of an ATS member school, my mentor also happens to be a person of color. She is a person of integrity and principles and possesses a clear sense of philosophy in leadership.
2. As of November 2007, sixty-three females held the position of president or academic dean in ATS member schools; forty-two of them attended the 2009 research summit.
3. Women of color were and still are challenged by ongoing self-identity issues based on race and gender. Asian and Asian American women, especially, carry the added

burden of being perceived as inferior, incompetent, docile, foreign, and competitor—real or imagined.

4. There are, however, three female Roman Catholic CEOs who serve in schools with nonpriestly educational programs.

5. John A. McGuckin, "A New Status for Women in Orthodoxy Today and Tomorrow," *Sophia*, Studies in Orthodox Theology, vol. 1, Dec. 2008 (New York: The Sophia Institute, 2009), 3.

6. I am not essentializing female disposition or saying that all men have dominant characters or all women have nurturing and caring characters. I have experienced some male leaders who displayed great aptitude in terms of caring and nurturing.

7. This number derives from research done by Sharon L. Miller at Auburn Theological Seminary.

8. <http://www.fastcompany.com/magazine/79/women.html?page=0%2C1> (accessed on December 14, 2009).

9. Robert Frost, "The Road Not Taken," in *Mountain Interval* (New York: Henry Holt and Co., 1920).

10. <http://www.typology.net/quotes/einstein.html> (accessed June 22, 2010).

11. Some of these women seem to perpetuate the status quo so long as they themselves are satisfied with their own personal ambition and accomplishment, in terms of having obtained and secured the coveted leadership position.

Women in Leadership in North American Theological Education

Eleanor Moody Shepherd
New York Theological Seminary

Although aware of the research project examining senior women in leadership in member schools of The Association of Theological Schools, I was not involved as a subject. Throughout the process and upon hearing the final results, I felt that it did not represent the experience of many of the women in senior leadership roles in Association schools. In my second year in a senior leadership position, I had hoped the research would provide insights that would help me function more effectively as a senior administrator and was disappointed that it did not add to my basic knowledge or understanding of the role.

For instance, the report, to my surprise, seemed sanitized and free of conflict. I have been in theological education as a student, faculty member, administrator, and senior administrator over the past twenty years and have observed that women are expected to function at a higher standard than their male counterparts. For most women it is very lonely at the top, because they are usually the only or the first woman in a senior leadership position at their institutions.

This is particularly true of senior women of African descent. I am one of the small number of African American female senior administrators. Zikmund's report was almost dismissive of the plight of racial/ethnic senior administrators: dismissive, because the report only made reference to the fact that there were two female African American presidents. These presidents lead schools that are struggling to survive and whose students are primarily people of color. Moreover, nothing was mentioned of the compound effect that the systemic problems of sexism and racism create for women of color.

In his plenary presentation, Dale Irvin, president of New York Theological Seminary, helped fill one of the gaps in this research. He posited that women in leadership positions in theological education are a challenge to the patriarchal order. He explained that women's presence, women's activities, women's energies, and women's engagement on the inside challenges the very nature of such a system, which has been constructed in order to exclude them. Irvin self-disclosed that he, as a white male in a senior leadership position, and other men in similar positions have benefited and continue to benefit from the privileges of being male—similar to the ongoing privileges of being white. He concluded that, while one cannot be reduced to the other, they are interlocking phenomena that reinforce each other.

Despite the shortcomings mentioned above, the report will be important for the future because it did provide details for a large number of women in senior leadership positions in theological education. Zikmund's research gave a very clear and detailed statistical analysis of Euro-American women in senior leadership positions and their progress. Her PowerPoint presentation provid-

ed visuals that traced the relative proportion of faculty, students, and administrators in ATS member schools. It also included information about their denominational affiliations and how the women changed them. It was interesting to note that many of the women were ordained and served in congregations.

One of the most significant insights in the report was the important role that mentoring and a strong and confidential support system play in the success of women in leadership. Many women depend on men to nurture and support them, because there are so few women in senior positions. The research documented that there are still too few women selected to fill the many senior positions in theological schools and that the number of women in senior leadership positions does not reflect the enrollment of women in the member schools. Concerns also arose about whether the women felt free to expose themselves by speaking candidly about their challenges and stresses in their institutions as well as the real or imagined risks that their hard-earned positions would be compromised if they made comments that could be perceived as negative about their institutions. The summit, however, provided an opportunity for senior women to network and share strategies and struggles in a supportive and safe place.

Overall, the report was a welcomed opportunity for women in senior leadership positions in theological schools in North America to come together and have some of their concerns at the center of the discussions while developing new networks and mentoring relationships.

Eleanor Moody Shepherd is vice president for academic affairs and academic dean for New York Theological Seminary.

Women and Men in Leadership in Theological Education

Barbara G. Wheeler and Sharon L. Miller
Auburn Theological Seminary

This article is based on surveys conducted in 2008 and on a presentation made in October 2009. For that reason, the data on numbers of men and women in senior leadership roles are taken from the database of The Association of Theological Schools compiled in 2008. The Auburn survey data include almost all women in the roles of CEO and academic dean of ATS member schools in 2008. Because the numbers of women are small, some differences between men and women that appear large do not meet tests of statistical significance. Some of those differences are reported here, however, when they form patterns that the researchers believe are worthy of further exploration. Differences significant at the level of $<.05$ are marked with asterisks within the tables.

Are women and men in leadership positions in North American theological schools very different from each other? Research undertaken by Auburn Theological Seminary's Center for the Study of Theological Education indicates that female presidents and deans, although similar in many ways to their male counterparts, do differ in a few significant ways.

In 2008, all chief executive officers (CEO)¹ and chief academic officers (CAO) from schools accredited by The Association of Theological Schools (ATS) were surveyed by the research center. Sixty-six percent (167) of the CEOs and 64 percent (159) of the CAOs responded to the questionnaire.² Unless stated otherwise, data referenced in this report are from these surveys. *President* will be used interchangeably for CEOs as will *dean* to indicate CAOs.

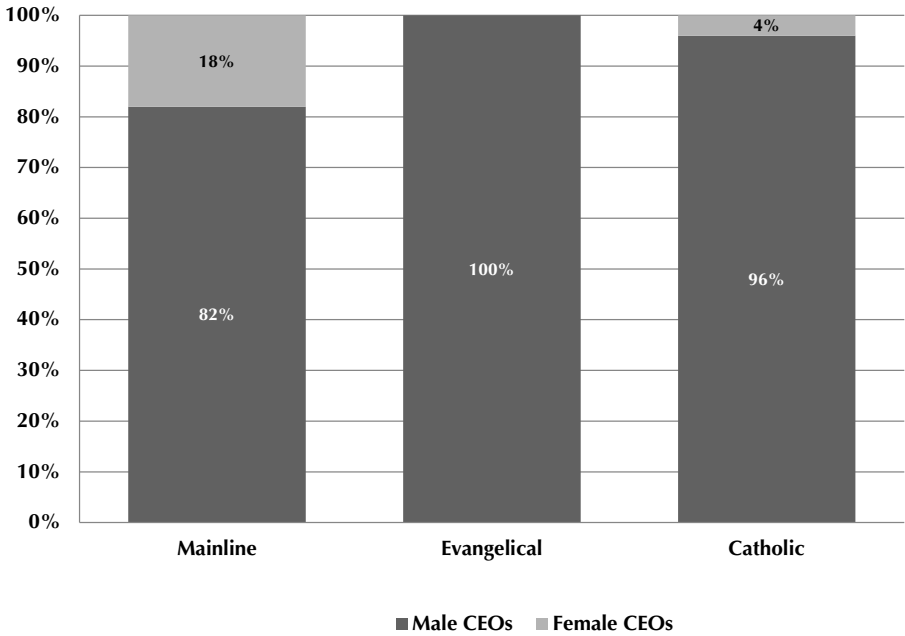
Where are the women?

The most noticeable finding from this research is the underrepresentation of women in top leadership positions in theological schools. Only 10 percent of the CEOs and 33 percent of the CAOs are women.³

The principal reason for the lack of women in leadership roles is that schools in some religious traditions do not allow women to serve in these roles. In mainline Protestant schools, where theology and tradition do not bar women from leadership, women make up 18 percent of the CEOs. As Figures 1a and 1b indicate, the numbers are slightly higher for female CAOs, who, in 2008, made up 35 percent of mainline Protestant schools, 11 percent of evangelical Protestant schools, and 18 percent of Roman Catholic schools.

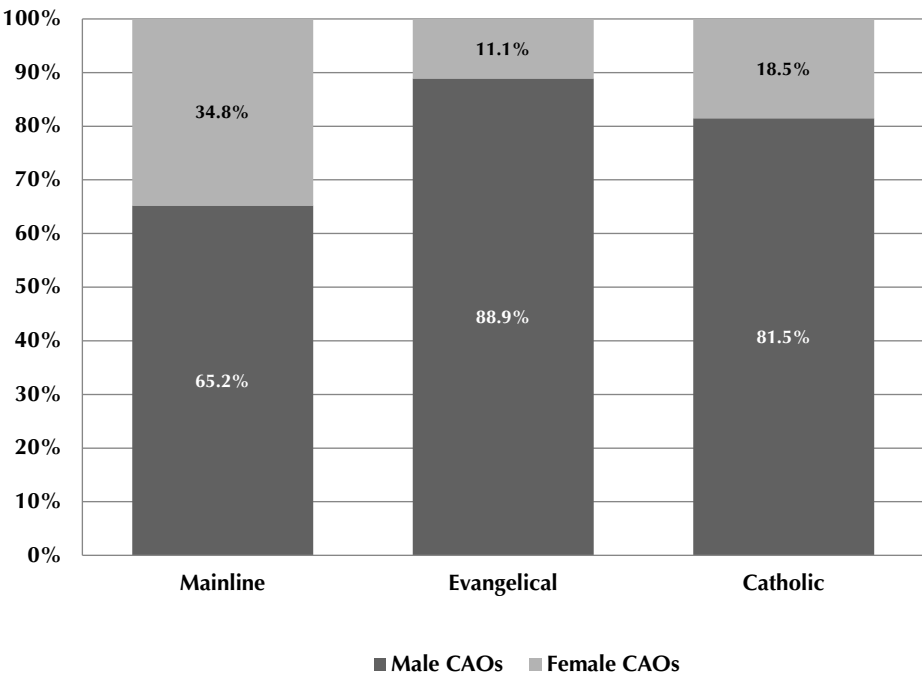
A second reason for the dearth of women in senior leadership is that women are underrepresented in some roles or professions that may lead to these positions. Among the presidents, Table 1 indicates most men and wom-

Figure 1a Gender and religious tradition of school for CEOs



Source: 2008 ATS database

Figure 1b Gender and religious tradition of school for CAOs



Source: 2008 ATS database

en have had academic experience before becoming president, but significantly fewer women have served in ministerial positions, another avenue to senior leadership in some church-related institutions. Nearly half (48%) of the male presidents but only 40 percent of the female presidents have served in a paid ministerial job. None of the women come with previous experience as president in another educational institution.

Table 1 Work experience before becoming president

	Women	Men
Faculty	73%	75%
Academic deans	47%	41%
Paid ministry	40%*	48%
President of another educational institution	—*	14%

*Statistical difference

Among the academic deans, women and men differ even more in their past work experience, as seen in Table 2. Although both have similar administrative experience within their institutions, men come with significantly more administrative experience in other institutions. Men are also more likely to have taught at another institution and to have worked in full-time ministry in a congregation. The discrepancy in ministerial experience is no doubt influenced by the barriers to congregational ministry for female deans in evangelical Protestant and Roman Catholic schools.

Table 2 Work experience before becoming academic dean

	Women	Men
Faculty at current institution	72%	78%
Administration at current institution	42%	41%
Faculty at other institution	25%*	43%
Administration at other institution	14%*	35%
Full-time ministry in congregation	67%*	83%

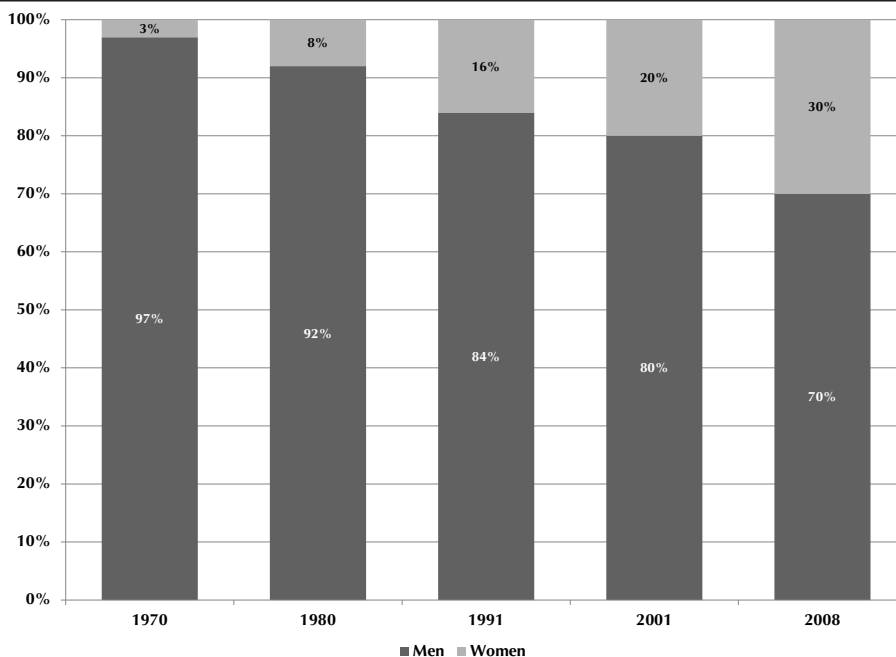
*Statistical difference

The ecclesiastical barriers that preclude women in some religious traditions from serving in congregations or in full-time ministry lie outside the purview of most theological schools, and this avenue toward leadership will likely remain limited for women for the foreseen future.

An avenue that women have broadly succeeded in traversing, however, is that of the academy. Three-quarters of the male and female presidents and deans have served as faculty in theological schools at some point in their careers. Might the imbalance of women in top leadership positions in theological education be remedied by increasing the number of women teaching in theological schools?

As Figure 2 shows, the percentage of women teaching in theological schools over the last forty years has risen significantly. In 1970, only 3 percent of theological school faculty members were women. This rose to 20 percent in 2001 and in the last seven years increased to 30 percent. This is indeed good news; however, these numbers hide two facts: First, female faculty are not distributed evenly across religious traditions. Theological schools within the evangelical and Roman Catholic worlds have far fewer female faculty than do mainline Protestant schools. Second, female faculty are more likely to be working in fields such as pastoral care, religious education, spiritual direction, ministry, and so forth. They are less likely to be teaching in the fields of theology, church history, or biblical studies—the academic fields of the majority of academic deans.

Figure 2 Gender of theological faculty, 1970–2008



Source: ATS database

The overall percentage of female faculty, however, is unlikely to move much beyond 30 percent in the foreseeable future because the number of female doctoral students in religion and theology has reached a plateau. A 1993 Auburn survey of doctoral students found that 32 percent of students were female; a 2003 Auburn survey found almost the same percentage. Likewise, the American Academy of Religion reported in 2003 that 32 percent of students in religion and theology were female. If there are not more female doctoral students in the pipeline, there are unlikely to be more female faculty and thus no significant increase in women in leadership positions in theological schools.

Similarities in the profiles of women and men

In some ways, female and male presidents and deans look remarkably alike in terms of their academic preparation, the positions they held immediately before taking office, and how involved they are in certain aspects of their jobs.

Education

At least two-thirds of all CEOs and CAOs hold a PhD, although male presidents and female deans are slightly more likely to have this degree than their counterparts. Male deans are more likely to hold the MDiv degree than female deans, which is in keeping with the higher percentage who have previously served full time in congregational ministry.

Previous position

Respondents to the surveys were asked what position they held immediately before assuming the office of CEO or CAO. Table 3 shows the remarkable similarity between women and men. Two-thirds of presidents and more than half of the deans came directly from academia. One-third of CEOs came directly from a church-related position. Twenty-eight percent of CAOs were previously in an administration position, most in their same institution. The only place we possibly see a “gender effect” is that more female deans came directly from the academy and more male deans came directly from church-related work.

Table 3 Position held immediately before assuming office

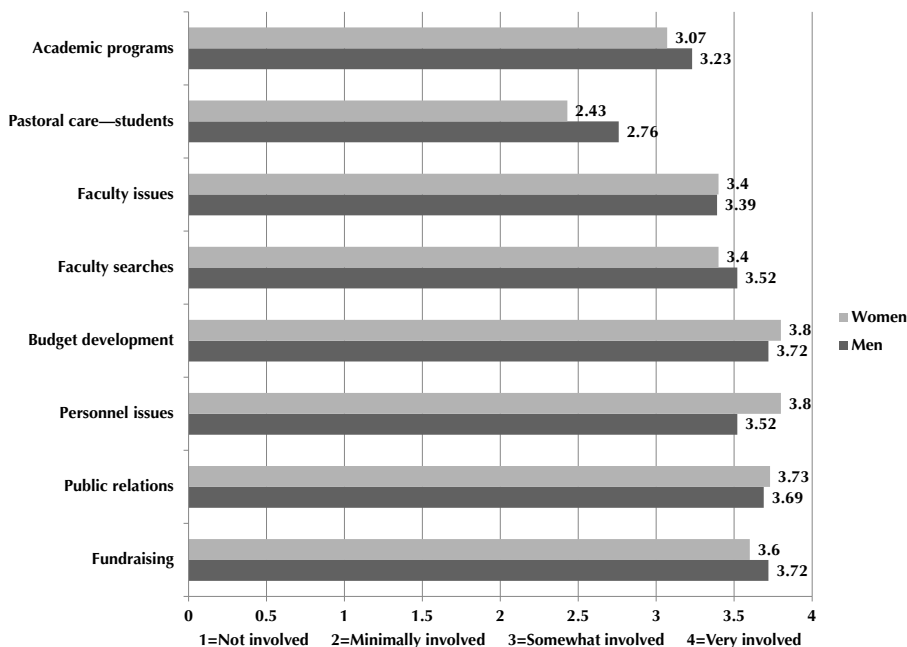
	Women	Men
Chief Executive Officers		
Academia	67%	65%
Church-related work	33%	33%
Chief Academic Officers		
Academia	58%	51%
Administration	28%	28%
Church-related work	8%	13%

Source: 2008 Auburn survey

Institutional involvement

There is often speculation that women and men approach their relationships and work differently from each other. The CEOs were asked to indicate how involved they were with various aspects of their jobs, and as indicated in Figure 3, there is little difference between the male and female presidents. Female presidents are slightly more involved in personnel issues and slightly less involved in pastoral care of students. The latter may be a factor of the higher percentage of male presidents who are ordained clergy (84 percent of male and 53 percent of female CEOs).

Figure 3 CEO level of institutional involvement



Differences in the profiles of women and men

Yet there are some differences between women and men in leadership in theological education in areas such as age and length of time in office, preparation for the position, relationships with key constituencies, and involvement in outside engagements.

Age

Women are, on average, two years older than their male counterparts, as shown in Table 4, and while they do not differ significantly from men in terms of how old they were when becoming deans, they are four years older on average when assuming the position of president.

Table 4 Age comparisons by gender of CEOs and CAOs

	Women	Men
Current age		
Presidents	61	59
Deans	57	55
Age when assuming office		
Presidents	56	52
Deans	52	51

Source: 2008 Auburn survey

If academia is the most accessible path for women to enter leadership in theological education, then it is not surprising that they are older than men when they reach these positions of leadership. Women on average enter doctoral programs later than men; it frequently takes them longer to earn their doctorates, to find academic positions, and to earn tenure status.

At the time of this research, female CEOs had been in office, on average, for nearly five (4.7) years, two years less than the men, and female CAOs for slightly more than four (4.3) years, one-and-a-half years less than the men, who averaged nearly six (5.8) years. We don't know from this data, however, if female deans and presidents remain in office for the same length of time as their male counterparts.

Preparation for the job

Some gender differences emerge, as we can see in Table 5, in terms of how well presidents feel they were prepared for their positions. Although a higher percentage of women say that major aspects of the job were new to them, a higher percentage also report that they were well prepared and confident in their new jobs. There were no gender differences reflected in the CAOs' answers to these same questions.

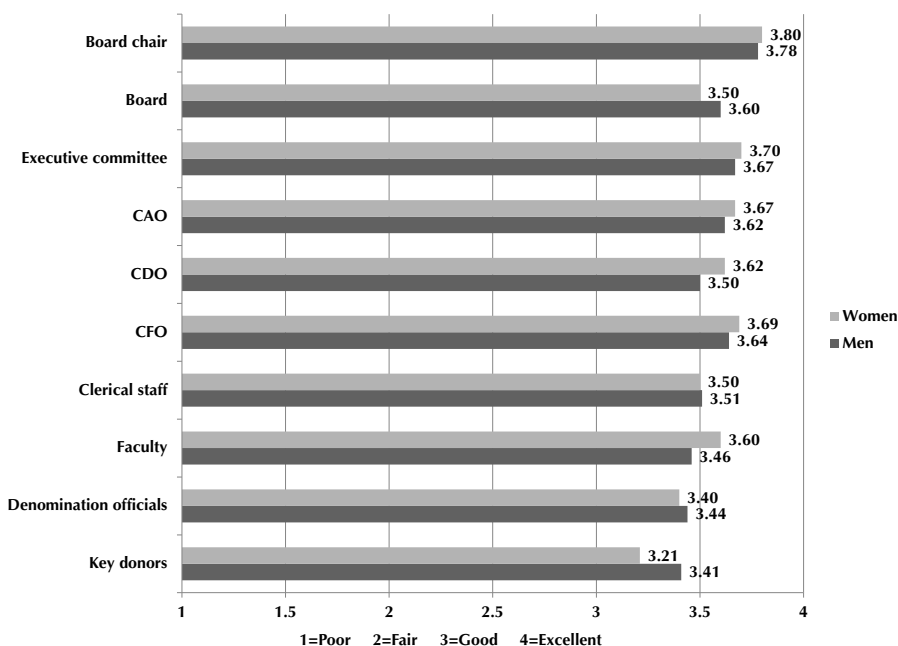
Table 5 Percent of presidents agreeing with statement of preparation for office

	Women	Men
My previous employment prepared me well.	93%	75%
Major aspects of the job were completely new to me.	73%	59%
I now feel confident in all aspects of my job.	86%	78%

Relationships

Although most female presidents feel slightly more confident in their jobs, there are some constituent relationships for which they are not quite as positive. Fewer CEO women than men say their relationships with key donors or their boards are excellent, as indicated in Figure 4. On the other hand, they give higher marks to their relationships with faculty and their administrative teams (chief financial officer, chief development officer, and chief academic officer).

Figure 4 How presidents characterize their relationships with others



Role of the faculty

We see the positive relationship with faculty reflected in female CEOs' responses to other questions as well. More women than men agreed with the following two statements:

- I consistently consult with faculty on institutional matters.
- The board, faculty, and administration usually reach a consensus.

And they were more likely to disagree with the following statement:

- I have made significant decisions that were opposed by faculty members.

Gender differences are also apparent in the CAO responses regarding the role of the faculty and the dean. More women than men agreed with the following statements:

- Decisions on academic policy should reflect the majority view of the faculty, rather than the judgment of the academic dean.
- The primary allegiance of the academic dean should be to the faculty rather than with the administration.
- The academic dean should be a strong advocate for faculty concerns.
- The continued appointment of the academic dean should be subject to faculty review.

From these data it appears that female presidents and deans may be more faculty-identified than their male counterparts. There are several possible reasons for this difference. More women than men were faculty members immediately before assuming the deanship; female deans are also less likely to have worked in other schools and served less time overall in administration. Female presidents are less likely to have served as CEO in another institution and more likely to have served previously in the institution that they now lead. Since female presidents and deans have less experience working in other institutions and are more likely to have been promoted from within the institutions they now serve, they are likely to have closer relationships with the faculty within their schools.

Outside engagements

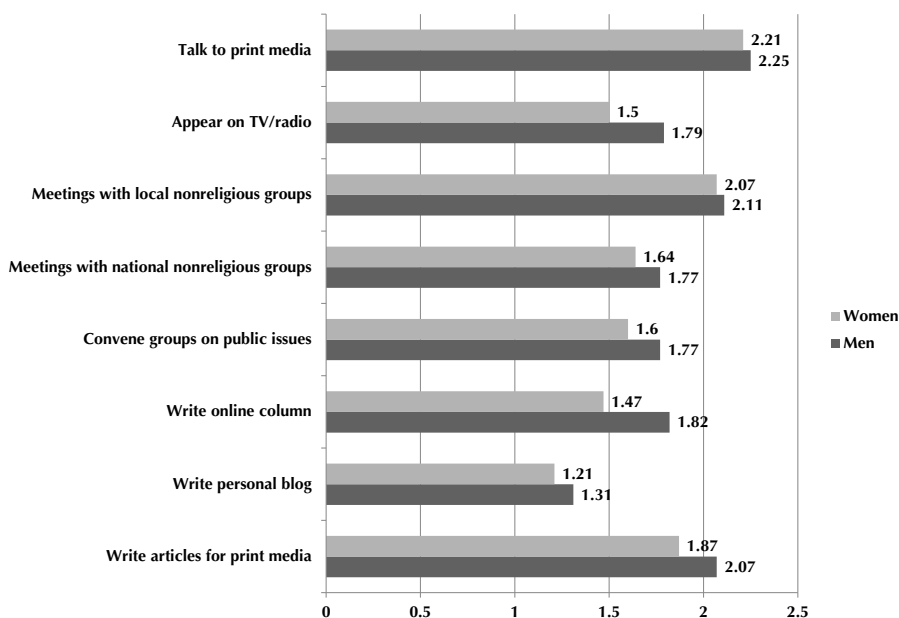
Gender differences among CEOs are evident in their level of outside engagement, as seen in Figure 5. It is apparent that most presidents, whatever their gender, are not highly involved in the world beyond their respective institutions or denominations. The only areas in which presidents contribute at least annually are talking to the media, attending meetings with local non-religious groups, and for male presidents, writing an opinion article for print. Women are less likely than men to contribute to the social discourse in any of these arenas. They are less likely to write an online column, convene groups on public issues, appear on television or radio, write opinion articles for print, or write a blog. We can only speculate as to the differences. Perhaps female CEOs are asked less often to participate in this way, or perhaps they are more focused on internal rather than external affairs.

Summary

Women have shown steady progress entering faculties in theological schools over the last thirty years, but it would be a mistake to assume that an increasing number of them will move into deanships and eventually into presidencies. Progress is stymied on two accounts: (1) some theological and ecclesiastical traditions preclude women in these leadership roles, and this is unlikely to change in the near future; and (2) the percentage of female faculty in theological schools is the same as the percentage of women in doctoral programs in theology and religion. There are not more women in the pipeline to significantly change the gender equation in the near future.

This does not mean, however, that there is nothing to be done about the imbalance. Schools and faculty members can encourage promising young women to enter doctoral programs and to consider the possibility of teaching in a theological school. Women already in doctoral programs need more financial support and encouragement to finish their programs in a timely manner. Women in junior faculty posts at theological schools need further support, as they move more slowly toward tenure than do men. Female faculty need to be encouraged to consider taking on leadership roles within their own or other institutions.

Figure 5 How often presidents engage in activities outside the institution



It is encouraging to note from this research that female CAOs and CEOs feel prepared for their positions and express confidence in all aspects of their jobs. They do, however, need continued leadership development to encourage and equip them for the complex institutions they are leading. The leadership seminars provided by The Association of Theological Schools provide valuable training for female deans and presidents as well as a much-needed chance to meet other colleagues.

Female presidents and deans appear to be more faculty-identified than their male counterparts. While positive faculty relationships are important for the smooth running of an institution, there may be danger in overidentification with the faculty instead of paying attention to board members and the executive team. CAOs and CEOs sometimes need to make decisions that set them at odds with the faculty, and they need the strength and perspective to do so.

Female presidents appear to be less engaged with outside issues than are their male colleagues. They need to be encouraged to play more visible roles within their church communities, their denominations, their local communities, and the wider world. Encouraging them to be more public might help, in the long run, with the problem of “supply.” When female presidents are public figures, some young women will aspire to those same roles.

Although some of the women in this study are the first female deans or presidents in their schools, they are doing well in their positions and express a great deal of satisfaction with their jobs. All the female CEOs agreed with

the statement, "I love my job," compared to 94 percent of the men. Eighty-six percent of them said they would do it again if given a choice. (The comparable figure for male CEOs was 89 percent.) Among the CAOs, 89 percent of both men and women said they would do it again.

The female deans and presidents of this study have sometimes found themselves in leadership roles they never intended on assuming. They have drawn on their strengths and considerable skills to further the life of their institutions. We can only hope that in the decades to come more such women emerge to lead theological education in North America.

ENDNOTES

1. CEO refers to the individual who oversees the theological school. In divinity schools, they are often referred to as the dean; in Canada they are often the principal; in Catholic schools they may be the rector.
2. The CEOs who responded to the survey closely match in demographics the ATS database of all CEOs of theological schools in North America. The religious tradition of the schools they represented (mainline Protestant, evangelical Protestant, and Roman Catholic) also mirrored that of the database.
3. This represents nearly all the women in these two positions in 2008.

Women's Well-Being in Seminary: A Qualitative Study

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Bethel Seminary

We conducted a qualitative study using data gathered from current female students and recent alumnae for the purpose of better understanding the experience of female seminary students. Analysis revealed four factors that appear to have the greatest impact on the overall experience: (1) relational and power dynamics, (2) theological positions on women in ministry, (3) the degree of gender (de)segregation encountered, and (4) other environmental factors. Practical recommendations regarding strategies designed to enhance the well-being of female seminary students are described.

The first woman graduated from seminary in 1850, and yet it is only the past forty years that have marked a significant influx of women into formal theological education in seminaries. Few women entered seminaries prior to 1970. During the 1970s and 1980s, the number of female students enrolling in theological schools rose dramatically, primarily within mainline Protestant seminaries.¹ Initially, most women entered seminary without a clear intent to pursue ordination or a pastoral vocation but were interested in studying theology or considering vocations in religious education or sacred music. However, during the 1970s and 1980s, the number of women in Master of Divinity (MDiv) programs increased markedly. This meant that increasing numbers of women were pursuing spiritual and vocational callings in what had been traditionally male environments.

A small number of studies during this period attempted to understand the unique stressors that might impact women in theological education. For example, Jackson Carroll et al. surveyed 636 clergywomen for a study published in 1983 and noted that female seminarians often reported experiencing (1) pressure to outperform male students academically to gain credibility and (2) a lack of mentoring from male faculty, who kept them at “arm’s length, pretending that they did not exist or refusing to recognize them,” and engaged in more informal contact with male students.² In 1987, Joy Charlton published a review of the social science research to that date which suggested, compared to male seminarians, female seminarians were often (1) older, (2) more likely to be pursuing ministry as a second career, (3) more ambiguous regarding their ministry career plans, (4) less likely to report having a role model, (5) more likely to feel dissatisfied because their particular educational concerns (e.g., open relations with faculty) were not addressed, and (6) more concerned about the challenges of balancing family and work.³ Charlton noted that surveys of the seminary experience of current female students tended to be more negative than surveys of clergywomen, with the latter samples being biased toward those who survived seminary. She concluded at that time “a real ques-

tion remains, then, as to whether women have been truly integrated into [the] seminary experience."⁴ In the late 1990s, Barbara Brown Zikmund et al. found that clergywomen appreciated many aspects of their theological education but largely felt seminary had not prepared them to deal with the realities of sexism and loneliness they were struggling with in their ministries.⁵

It appears that virtually no studies of women and seminary have been published over the past decade. This is an omission particularly noteworthy for evangelical seminaries, since the largest influx of women in seminary has occurred during that time. In 2008, The Association of Theological Schools reported a total of 26,870 full-time female students or 35 percent of the student population at member schools. Women comprised the majority (54%) of ministerial non-MDiv students. The percentage of MDiv students who were women was only 5 percent in 1972 but 31 percent in 2008. By way of comparison, psychology graduate students in the United States total only about half the number of seminary students, but 77 percent are women. Perhaps that disparity helps explain the robust research literature on female graduate students in psychology, whereas research on women in seminary has mostly languished over the past twenty-five years.

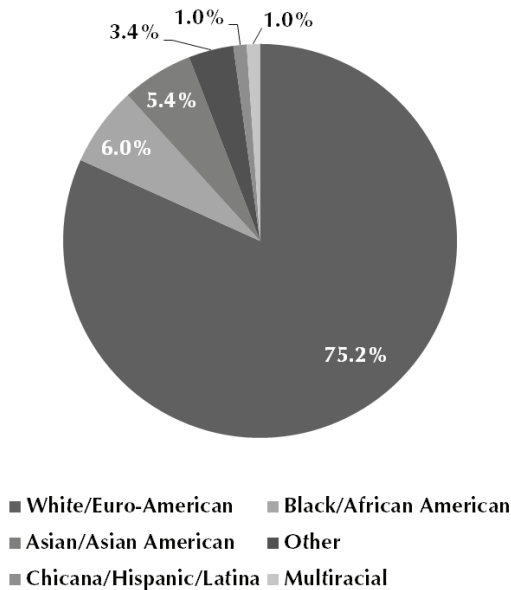
In the spring of 2008, Greg Bourgond (the then vice president of operations and strategic initiatives at Bethel Seminary), with the approval of Leland Eliason (provost), commissioned a qualitative survey of female students and alumnae from the prior five years. The survey was prompted by a pattern of anecdotal reports of some female students expressing concerns about negative experiences or a lack of support related to gender. The overall goal was twofold: (1) to gain a descriptive understanding of women's experiences at the seminary that contributed positively and negatively to their sense of well-being and vocational development, and (2) to develop systemic strategies for enhancing the well-being and vocational development of female students at the seminary. This latter goal reflects an action research strategy in which the focus is on using data to promote positive and socially just change in an organization. The larger administrative goal was to enhance overall gender relations at the seminary, so a decision was made to survey women in 2008 and survey male students and alumni in 2010. By studying a particular seminary, this project fits with Charlton's earlier call for research on women at individual seminaries rather than just further aggregating data across numerous seminaries. We chose a qualitative design in order to gain a "thick" narrative description of women's experiences, realizing they would likely be diverse.

Bethel Seminary is evangelical in tradition with students representing more than fifty denominations. In 2008, full-time enrollment in the three regional campuses (San Diego, St. Paul, Northeast) was 1,151 students with 38 percent being female, slightly higher than the overall ATS percentage of female students. The full-time faculty included both "complementarians" and "egalitarians" with the former typically holding theological convictions that would restrict some ministry roles (e.g., senior pastor) for men only. The full-time faculty was 11 percent women (three out of twenty-eight), as compared to the overall percentage of female faculty of 31 percent at ATS member schools.

Method

A set of survey questions was developed by the research team and pilot tested with a group of female students and alumnae for feedback. Some questions were revised based on the feedback, resulting in a survey with seven questions (see appendix), each followed by a text box for participants to offer qualitative responses. The study was then submitted to the Bethel Institutional Review Board for ethical approval. In the summer of 2008, an email invitation was sent to all current female students and alumnae who had graduated in the past five years, inviting them to participate in a confidential survey. The email was distributed by administrative staff and contained a link to the on-line survey that had been constructed in such a way that respondents could not be identified. A total of 202 participants endorsed the informed consent and completed the survey. The sample included 53 percent current students and 39 percent alumnae (8% did not report). The mean age was 42 years (range 22–72). The ethnic demographics are shown in Figure 1.

Figure 1 Ethnic demographics of survey participants



Preliminary data analysis involved reading survey responses, organized by survey question, in their entirety in order to gain a general sense of the whole. Researchers read the data independently and recorded summary phrases or statements that represented significant response themes. The data were read a second time using open coding to develop categories of information, highlighting statements or phrases that seemed especially revealing about the metastory captured within the responses. A final, more detailed

reading focused on each statement or phrase provided by participants. Researchers reflected on what each revealed about the experience of the participant group. Once these tasks were completed on an individual basis, the research team met to compare interpretive findings. Out of this collaborative process emerged the thematic results that will be detailed in the following section. A second data analysis involved the reading of survey responses, organized by participant, for the purpose of achieving both within-case and across-case analysis. Again, phrases or statements were created to represent the primary experience of each participant. These insights were triangulated with the previously established findings, resulting in confirmation of preliminary themes as well as the addition and clarification of thematic nuances.

By employing a team approach to data analysis, the researchers sought to ensure that the analysis resulted in an accurate reflection of the participants' experiences. Thematic interpretations were compared and revised until consensus was reached. Another way the trustworthiness of this study was enhanced was by a continuous back-and-forth movement between the whole and the specific of the data and back-and-forth conversation regarding our data analysis interpretations. Being part of a team allowed us to critique one another's descriptions and offer alternative perspectives or conclusions. Finally, each researcher maintained a journal in which assumptions and biases could be reflected upon and bracketed in an effort to preserve the integrity of the data. The representative texts that illustrate each of the themes in the following section possess strong interrater reliability and reflect the demographic ratio of current students to alumni in the participant sample. Although demographic data collected did not identify which of the three Bethel Seminary campuses participants attend(ed), response content provided by participants did reveal that all campuses were represented by a mix of positive and negative reports, and although all identifying information has been concealed, representative texts include participants from all three campuses. Participants frequently mentioned the names of faculty and staff, and such identifying information has been sanitized for this article. The researchers are grateful for the courage and clarity with which participants related their experiences. Our need to limit the number of texts used to support the identified themes and to omit examples out of concern to protect the confidentiality of each participant does not diminish the value of any individual response.

Findings and themes

Relational and power dynamics

The responses from the participants comprised a wide range of perspectives that included positive, negative, and neutral experiences. The researchers have offered a representative sample of texts highlighting this range. The first theme that emerged focused on the way women experience the classroom atmosphere and specifically the ways that *relational and power dynamics impact female students' experiences in theological discourse and classroom interactions*. For survey participants, encounters within the learning environment mattered a great deal. The manner in which the classroom was managed and the ways

in which students and faculty discussed theological issues contributed to the overall learning atmosphere and impacted participants' further engagement in or away from the learning process.

In one class I was very quiet about my opinions since I knew that others in the room would not agree. The professor drew my opinions out in a way that was accepting and became a learning experience for other students. He was kind and supportive and gracious.

I was on campus (St. Paul) for a performing arts event. I was interested in the seminary. During a break I inquired and was allowed to visit a class in session. While in the (all male) class, a student commented on the "place of a woman" . . . something to the effect of being barefoot and at home. Other students chuckled and the professor smiled but said nothing. I was offended and left feeling unwelcomed.

In a class, when discussing gender unity, I had a male classmate open his Bible to the passage in I Timothy 2, hold up his Bible, and start thumping the page while looking at me and saying to me that females were to be silent in the church.

I have found the faculty to be empowering to me as a woman. In one case where a fellow male student made a comment about how all of the beautiful women were non-Christians, the instructor responded in a way that challenged the comment and acknowledged how it might have felt to be a woman in the class hearing his comment. This incident is the only time I experienced this type of insensitivity from a fellow student.

My professor, over winter intensives, made repeated digs regarding my complementarian position on women in the pulpit. I was the only female in the class, though there was one other complementarian who just kept his mouth shut.

Even more frustrating was the lack of engagement with gender as a significant theological category. I feel that, given the contested nature of the question of women in ministry, etc., the issue is neglected as easier not to touch. But to neglect the issue of gender, and the resulting theology, seems impossible.

Sometimes faculty was paternal in tone. I had an experience in which when I asked for clarification on an assignment I was blamed for not knowing it—very paternally—language was used to let me know that was something I should have known. I had an experience in which a student wanted to

dialogue about women in ministry biblically. But it was not a dialogue—only assertion that his view was correct biblically.

I have felt free and safe to express my opinions in papers and in class. I think the professors encourage a variety of perspectives. I have found professors to be very proactive in protecting the viewpoints of all students.

Call and vocation

A second theme that became apparent in the data centered on some of the inconsistencies that female seminarians experience in terms of call and vocation. Respondents appeared less concerned about job security and more focused on wanting encouragement toward the pursuit and the endeavor itself. The theme that emerged was that *the inclusive stance of Bethel Seminary related to positions on women in ministry can result in a disjunctive experience for female students related to vocational development and call*. Some of the discrepancies participants have experienced include mixed messages regarding their calls, questions about women and leadership roles, exclusion from preaching, and a lack of female mentors.

In one class a male student made the comment, “just look around the room, in a class of thirty-five, there were only four female students, so that is proof that a woman should not be leading the church.” I don’t remember what we were discussing, but I remember the comment and how it reaffirmed for me that we are still far from equality.

I had several professors who I felt encouraged me to listen for the full extent of God’s call on my life. These professors also affirmed my call in specific ways.

After class, I asked a professor a follow-up question to his lecture, and he changed the topic and told me point-blank that women cannot be preaching pastors, cannot protect the church from error, and cannot administer church discipline. I considered dropping out of seminary but received encouragement from my husband, a local pastor, and a counselor to stay.

Paradoxically, they’ve been challenged in both positive and negative ways. Some faculty and staff (students) encouraged me to follow God’s call on my life, and I began to believe that I could be a pastor. But others discouraged me from becoming a pastor/leader in the church. This affected my sense of well-being (emotionally and theologically) because I was confused about my identity and was receiving mixed messages about my acceptability, both as a pastor and as a person.

The discussion of women in ministry was a touchy one. There were classes in which it was safe to discuss and other classes in which it was just best not to go there. I have had male faculty state that women should not aspire to be senior pastors although they would be welcome in some assisting type of role—preferably children’s ministry.

A male professor told me that I was making a wise decision getting a MATS degree instead of an MDiv because many churches wouldn’t consider hiring me if I, as a woman, had an MDiv, but they would with a MATS.

Professors and staff have been very helpful and supportive during my seminary time. They have supported my ministry ideas and helped me identify strengths for ministry. They have treated me as a valued and important part of the Bethel community.

Gender (de)segregation

Third, participants’ responses indicate that *the degree of gender (de)segregation encountered by female students has a significant influence on the quality of their experience*. It appeared that this issue is not related specifically to the numeric ratio of men to women but rather to the sense of marginalization that female students experience.

I feel the men have a very loving spirit towards me . . . and would never let anything happen to me physically . . . but I feel that as I will never be male, I will never “belong” to the male pastor circle.

Challenged is too strong a statement. . . . marginalized is a better term. I often experienced an aloofness from young white men in the program. I just don’t think they have learned yet to engage theologically or intellectually with women. What these men don’t understand is that they are often courted to be clergy. Women would not experience this in an evangelical setting. We often feel called and engage in the call against the odds of success.

Participants’ experiences of “belongingness” were informed by both overt and subtle acts of inclusion or exclusion. Specific examples of exclusion included physical segregation by gender, unquestioned gender assumptions, inconsistent implementation of gender-inclusive language, and limited representation of female authors.

Students' comments on Blackboard forums were hurtful, sexist, insensitive. As Jesus's birth to Mary was sexualized, women were put down also.

A global way in which I felt second class was when male students and faculty and administration would greet other males in the hallways, but I would be right there or right behind or in front of them, and they did not even look at me. I often seemed invisible because I was a woman. Much learning is accomplished in groups that discuss. Males would group to discuss, but less often did they include females. I tried to break in but never succeeded. At Bethel University College of Arts and Sciences this was completely the opposite.

I am a [delivery system] student, and I had one experience that was hurtful to me when I took my first [delivery system] class. I cautiously entered the room, looking around for anyone I knew, and the male student behind me said, "What is this . . . Hebrew for women?" Now, the whole room was not women, but in actuality there were eight women and nine men in the room at the time. I guess he was used to there being all men in his classes. His comment frustrated me, and I wondered if he intentionally meant to hurt me.

Once I was the only woman in a class, and the professor told a joke that was derogatory toward women. It was so incredibly awkward. Every man in the classroom immediately looked at me, but I didn't say anything. Since then I have reflected on what I could have done or said in response. I am still unsure, but I hope to address inappropriate situations better in the future.

Most books used in classes are written by males. Most of the professors are male. A female understanding or minority voices are not considered as valid as those of white males when thinking about theology or Biblical studies.

There is a consistent usage of language by students, professors, and in worship referring to God as He, Him, Father, King and referring to members of the faith community as mankind, men, he, and him. When I have used neutral terms (Creator instead of Father) I am questioned as to why.

The presence of female peers and the sense of belongingness that appears more likely to develop in cohort/mod/core group learning models emerged as mitigating factors contributing to a greater sense of inclusion.

Finding a group of seminary women to meet and do prayer and spiritual direction with has been essential. Female faculty/staff who continue to encourage me are bright lights in my life.

The group of students that started in [term] were very fortunate to have bonded very quickly and became a cohesive group of both men and women . . . I believe if you are looking for connection, you will find it at Bethel—the students are diverse and most open to opportunities to meet new people—at least in the In-Ministry program.

I tend to be shy and not say anything in my classes until I feel comfortable with the class and professor. As part of SemPM, I traveled with a mod, and I was able to speak much more quickly in the classes I took because I already had relationships with those in my mod and wasn't worried about how they would view my comments.

As students at [campus] we had a small core group that took most of our classes together. As we got to know each other and pray for each other, a bond formed with them. Even though I was the only woman in my core group, and at least half [of the other students] started with the negative view of women in ministry, that bonding was powerful and really overcame those negative feelings.

Environmental safety and support

Finally, *environmental factors are critical to female students' sense of safety and support*. These factors include physical concerns, such as restroom availability and campus security, as well as emotional concerns related to life cycle challenges. Some women reported drawing positively on personality and previous experience in an effort to navigate a male-dominated environment, while others reflected the dual challenge of being a woman of color. This theme demonstrates the importance of the nonacademic facets of the student experience.

The only thing that came up while I was a student was the theft in the parking lots. It was sometimes scary to walk through the parking lots after a late night class. The campus didn't feel as safe after those events.

I feel unsupported as I look toward being a new mother and a seminary student this fall. I spoke with several Bethel Seminary staff members regarding my concerns over taking classes and breastfeeding or pumping breast milk, and I felt completely ignored and passed over. I was told to use the bathroom or the Flame Room in the library. Both of these op-

tions are extremely unappealing to me, as they do not provide the necessary privacy. I did not feel heard at all.

I requested extended time to complete my course work at Bethel due to life changes that could be arguably female (pregnancy, subsequent child rearing, and relocation due to my husband's job). I was grateful that the extension was granted. The extension may have been declined if there had been no understanding/sensitivity to the concerns of a female student.

Knowing that there is a woman's representative on the student senate has been helpful, as has participating in events that have been planned. Also having those professors who have taken me seriously and who have made an investment in my life has meant a lot. Those times when I have had the opportunity to meet the wives of male seminary students have also been helpful as it seems to allow for all of us to be able to be less awkward.

A few more women's bathrooms would be nice! Also, it would be helpful not to schedule meetings in the evening (especially during winter intensives) where a woman might be walking to her car after dark alone. This has happened to me twice, and it's a little unsettling.

My experiences as a [professional] more than prepared me for any situation that arose in seminary. . . . I don't take much nonsense about gender from anyone.

My sense of safety was challenged in a small way by the fact that there was practically no Asian theology, philosophy, or thought discussed in any of the classes.

The photography found in the media and literature when I started didn't represent me (female African American).

Discussion

Overall, the findings of this study suggest a diverse set of experiences and understandings among female students and alumnae from this particular seminary. One of the important implications for theological educators is to resist stereotypes of female students and to seek to understand the diversity and complexity of women (and men) in theological education. We will briefly consider connections between these findings and three related areas of social science research.

Relational dynamics and formation

Participants frequently described relational dynamics, both positive and negative, as highly influential on their seminary experience. Particular staff and faculty were often referenced by name for being supportive, interested, and accessible, while other references were to relational dynamics of exclusion, disinterest, or sexist behavior. While some might assume that female students are most concerned about the theological positions of faculty and staff on women in ministry, this was almost never mentioned. Rather, women were concerned about opportunities for mentoring, career development, and intellectual engagement, which they sometimes felt were neglected. This is similar to findings from Bohn's earlier study.⁶ Peer relational dynamics were also repeatedly mentioned, especially behavior of exclusion versus inclusion by male students toward female students.

These findings suggest the need for a relational perspective in (1) graduate education and (2) spiritual and personal formation. Learning and formation are relational processes. Empirical research on faith integration among Christian doctoral students in psychology has found that students rate relational dynamics with faculty as the single most important factor in how they learn integration.⁷ In the relational approach to spiritual and personal formation we employ at Bethel Seminary, we have increasingly emphasized healthy gender relations as an essential dimension of spiritual growth.⁸ Developmental constructs such as attachment and differentiation of self are useful for helping students, faculty, and staff begin to develop capacities for healthy relationships across differences. Formative work on gender relations in a seminary context often needs to be framed through theological integration to communicate that it is not "secular political correctness" but an essential part of spiritual maturity.

Gender microaggressions

Some experiences reported in this study also parallel the construct of "microaggression" that has emerged in the multicultural psychology literature. Racial microaggressions are defined as "brief and commonplace daily verbal, behavioral, or environmental indignities, whether intentional or unintentional, that communicate hostile, derogatory, or negative racial slights and insults toward people of color."⁹ Participants in this study report many forms of gender microaggression or behaviors that communicate hostile, derogatory, or negative slights and insults based on gender. These included direct statements and intimidating behavior from male students to communicate that women do not belong at the seminary, sexist and exclusionary jokes, and stereotyping generalizations about women. Unfortunately, these experiences of gender microaggression in a seminary context are strikingly consistent with sexism against women in other workplaces that undergo desegregation. For example, the well-documented story of women miners in the 1970s–80s in the Minnesota Iron Range depicts the anxious and hostile behavior of many men who used some similar tactics—verbal abuse, hostile jokes, and even resistance to making restrooms accessible—to try to exclude women from that male-dominated workplace.¹⁰ These realities highlight complicated issues of physical and emotional safety for women entering traditionally male environments.

Two implications are crucial for consideration in this brief summary. First, it is important for theological educators to move past idealism to recognize that gender desegregation, like all forms of desegregation, can raise anxiety and increase the potential for victimization. Systems do not change without intentional work on relational dynamics. In fact, it seems reasonable to hypothesize that some males may even gravitate to what they expect to be a predominantly male environment at a seminary and then cope with their disappointment or anxiety about the presence of large numbers of women by acting out or through passive-aggressiveness. Second, many women in the study described ways that certain staff and faculty made a constructive difference by explicitly intervening to challenge sexist behavior in the system while other faculty and staff seemed to neglect or enable such problems. It was striking how many narratives involved negative experiences by women students with either (1) male adjunct faculty or (2) male student peers when no faculty or staff was in the room. This suggests the need for theological educators to be particularly vigilant to members of the community who might act out if undersupervised. More broadly, this can serve as a challenge to theological educators to move beyond passive resistance or waiting for problems to arise to becoming more active in educating students and colleagues on how to overcome sexism and other forms of oppression.

Gender minimization

Many participants also described experiences of feeling women were ignored or minimized in this seminary context, while some other participants voiced a preference for a minimization of gender differences. This suggests that the category of "minimization" from the literature on intercultural relations might be usefully applied to gender. In the Developmental Model of Intercultural Sensitivity, minimization refers to a stance of relating to cultural differences by minimizing their significance and focusing on similarities across cultures.¹¹ The strength of this approach is that it can encourage a surface commitment to equal rights and uniform policies, and minimization can represent resilient assimilation for those of nondominant groups such as women and persons of color in the United States. However, as an overarching stance toward difference, minimization masks the realities of social privilege and the inequity in how uniform policies are implemented. Minimization also obscures differences that are meaningful in human experience and limits capacities for relationship across such differences. Those who are interculturally competent are able to recognize both similarities and differences across cultures, value taking the perspective of others, and care about working toward social justice to overcome power inequities.

While typically applied to cultural differences, minimization may accurately describe both a systemic and a personal stance toward gender differences. A substantial number of participant responses suggest that one way that women, as members of the nondominant gender group, may choose to cope with this expectation is to minimize gender difference and to focus instead on what they have in common with men, that is, their essential humanity. As one participant reflected, "I don't set myself apart. . . . At Bethel we were

all students. I don't see male, female, black, white." Some participants said they did not want to be treated differently as women but wanted equal treatment. While this may prove to be an effective strategy for getting along in the system, it may also represent a loss of diverse and unique perspectives. And according to the research by Zikmund et al., it might also lead to underpreparing women for the realities of sexism they may face after graduation when they assume leadership positions in congregations. Other participants seemed dissatisfied with gender minimization whether in the form of being ignored by male peers, through underrepresentation of women on the faculty or in syllabi, by the lack of appropriate lighting in the parking lot or restroom availability, or through experiences of resistance to gender-inclusive language. Conversely, many participants expressed appreciation for inclusive signs of women in faculty, staff, and administrative positions, as well as course work and extracurricular experiences that explicitly validated the contributions and expertise of women.

The religious heritage of Bethel Seminary embraces a form of "irenic spirit" that emphasizes unity and serenity, which are particularly Scandinavian cultural values with respect to conflict. When combined with dynamics of cultural or gender minimization, this emphasis may have the unintended effect of reinforcing conformity and discouraging expressions of difference. Through the lens of minimization, it is also difficult to recognize the difference between intent and impact, since awareness of impact requires capacities for empathy across difference. Few educators probably intend to marginalize female students, but a lack of awareness of the impact of all male authors on a syllabi or noninclusive language can have the marginalizing impact of minimization. This pattern can be self-perpetuating, because people generally do not correct problems they do not see. Again, participant experiences were diverse and influenced by their prior contexts. Some participants experienced the seminary as more empowering of women than the systems they came from. Many other participants in this study suggested that the gender imbalance represented in the faculty, administration, and student body at Bethel Seminary may contribute to a culture in which the dominant male perspective is, in many cases, unconsciously imposed as the norm. For the latter, men seem to be imbued with institutional privilege and power that is not readily available to women in the system. This may explain, at least in part, the experience many women participants report of being allowed and tolerated but never feeling fully accepted as well as the apparent difficulty Bethel Seminary has faced recruiting and retaining women faculty.

Limitations and future research

Several limitations of the present study are worth noting. First, as in all studies, it is possible that participant experiences differed from those who chose not to participate. This limitation is somewhat mitigated by the diverse range of experiences reported by participants in a relatively large sample by qualitative standards. However, the qualitative survey design did not allow for the dialogue of interview methods, which might have further elaborated participant narratives. Second, the findings represent the report of female stu-

dents and alumnae from a single seminary, and caution should be exercised in generalizing to other seminaries. Some themes in our findings (e.g., relational dynamics with faculty) appear consistent with studies more than twenty years ago at mainline Protestant seminaries.¹² The paucity of research in this area over the past two decades makes it impossible to determine whether these issues have migrated to evangelical seminaries where gender desegregation is finally occurring or whether similar dynamics continue to be operative across seminaries. Contemporary studies are needed on women's experiences in other seminaries. Bethel Seminary may also represent a unique type of context as one of a small number of seminaries with faculty holding both egalitarian and complementarian positions on women in ministry. The research team members are all employees at Bethel Seminary, and we acknowledge it is not possible to be perfectly objective within a system, even with measures of bracketing assumptions. Future studies might also benefit from inclusion of quantitative measures to investigate factors that might be predictive of various evaluations, and such measures would be particularly useful for longitudinal research or studies comparing women's experiences in different types of seminary contexts. We did not measure intercultural or gender minimization in this study, but future studies might attempt to operationalize gender minimization. Some participants in this study expressed concern that male students and alumni also be surveyed in the future in order to gain a holistic understanding of gender relations at the seminary. It could be useful to seek to identify particular theological viewpoints or rationales that male students use to justify exclusionary behavior toward female students. Finally, the sample in this study was largely Euro-American, and the qualitative design made it impossible to determine whether ethnicity or other diversity variables would have significantly differentiated participant experiences.

Recommended strategies

This study was commissioned for the dual purposes of (1) gaining an understanding of women's experiences at Bethel Seminary and (2) generating recommendations regarding systemic strategies designed to enhance the overall well-being of female students. The final question of the survey invited participants to offer recommendations that were coded and grouped into seven categories. Specific strategies emerged as members of the research team worked with the aggregate data and engaged in dialogue with seminary faculty, staff, and administration to seek to contextualize participant recommendations. Seminary faculty discussed the findings during a faculty retreat. All female students and alumnae were invited to a public presentation of the findings, which also provided helpful feedback for forming strategies. Strategic recommendations include both routine technical solutions, such as the installation of improved lighting and additional security in the parking lots, which can and have been addressed with relative ease, as well as more complex adaptive solutions that may require innovative systemic reform. It is important to note that some recommendations involve continuing effective

practices that have already been implemented at Bethel Seminary, while other recommendations necessitate new practices.

Intentional socialization on gender relations includes focused attention on learning opportunities that could facilitate increasing healthy gender relations among all members of the Bethel community. The data suggested some students had experienced very positive gender relations while others reported mixed or problematic gender relations. Suggested strategies include (1) offering antisexism and gender relations training to current faculty and staff parallel to antiracism efforts at Bethel University, (2) continuing to make antisexism and gender relations values an explicit component of orientation for new students, (3) training faculty and staff on ways of effectively intervening when they observe sexist behavior, and (4) helping students understand mechanisms of gaining support if they experience negative behaviors from others in the Bethel community.

Vocational development includes attention to supporting the process of vocational development and calling of female students. Suggested strategies include (1) continuing intentional efforts of the Placement Office to network with denominations that ordain women, (2) being honest with female students about potential employment challenges while also offering support for facing those challenges (e.g., pastoral student support group for women), and (3) encouraging faculty and staff to demonstrate an interest in the vocational journeys of female students that is equivalent to their interest in the vocational journeys of male students.

Hiring and personnel wisdom refers to intentional efforts to hire, retain, and promote employees who are effective in relating to both male and female students. Suggested strategies include (1) hiring more female faculty and administrators; (2) hiring male faculty who have demonstrated a track record of collaborating with female peers and who are conversant with female scholars in their discipline; (3) including women in personnel decisions; (4) recognizing, retaining, and promoting personnel who excel in gender relations; and (5) attending to the gender relations capacities of adjunct faculty.

Enhanced theological and scholarly engagement refers to intentional efforts to engage the contributions and concerns of women in theology, church history, and other scholarly disciplines. Suggested strategies include (1) recognizing the contributions of women in church history, (2) listing female authors in syllabi, (3) engaging feminist and female theologians and scholars and potentially offering a course in gender and theology, (4) embracing gender inclusive language, (5) planning intentional discussions of gender and ministry in the curriculum, and (6) providing opportunities for advanced research for students interested in gender concerns.

Enhanced formation engagement refers to intentional efforts to cultivate formative capacities for healthy gender relations. Suggested strategies include (1) bolstering efforts to help all Bethel community members learn how to relate well to both women and men, (2) enhancing specific teaching on male privilege and other forms of social privilege, and (3) supporting small groups and cohorts that provide opportunities for healthy gender experiences.

Enhanced leadership engagement refers to intentional efforts to cultivate the leadership development of both genders. Suggested strategies include (1) creating opportunities for female students to be mentored and to find ministry networks with female leaders, (2) using examples of women at all levels of leadership in class illustrations and case studies, (3) offering women-in-ministry conferences, and (4) recognizing that preaching courses are a particularly sensitive space for gender relations.

Physical safety and support refers to intentional efforts to attend to the impact of the physical environment on women. Suggested strategies include (1) improving lighting and security in the parking lots, (2) providing adequate restroom facilities, and (3) providing private space for breastfeeding.

Conclusion

One of the issues central to the well-being of female seminarians is how well women have been integrated into the seminary experience. This study demonstrates that gender integration is complex and dependent on a number of factors. The data clearly illustrate that there is not a singular defining experience of well-being for female students at Bethel Seminary. Rather, their integrative experiences are impacted by the interaction of relational and power dynamics, theological perspectives, social assumptions and structures, and environmental factors. One implication of the resulting divergent reports of well-being is that an effective systemic response will include strategic interventions that are multidimensional and flexible enough to address the varied needs of individual female students. The data also reveal that theological educators (i.e., staff, faculty, administration) can make both positive and negative relational contributions to the experiences of women in seminary. The findings suggest the potential value in reviving research on women in seminaries, as the challenges for women in theological education have not been eliminated. The level of response we received from female students and alumnae suggests many women are quite eager to share their stories.

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Appendix

Survey Questions

We are interested in your overall experience of well-being and safety as a female student at Bethel Seminary. We realize that female students have reported a range of experiences in the seminary environment, and we want to better understand these differing experiences. There are many dimensions of well-being and safety (emotional, relational, physical, intellectual, theological, etc.), and we are interested in any and all these dimensions. Feel free to respond to the questions that seem most relevant to your experience.

1. Please describe any ways in which you have felt your sense of well-being or safety (i.e., emotional, relational, physical, intellectual, theological, etc.) were challenged in any way at Bethel Seminary. Feel free to be as specific or as general as you would like.
2. Please describe any experiences of students or faculty expressing views (whether personal or theological) that you considered derogatory or hurtful to you as a woman in seminary and how it impacted you.
3. Have you felt free to express your thoughts and opinions in classes and class work to professors and other students? Why or why not?
4. Please describe the degree to which you have felt encouraged to explore all aspects of your calling at Bethel Seminary by faculty, staff, and other students.
5. Do you feel faculty and staff at Bethel Seminary understand your concerns as a female student? Why or why not?
6. If you can, please suggest any improvements that you believe could improve the sense of well-being and safety of female students in our seminary environment.
7. Please also describe any experiences or factors that have been helpful for you in feeling a sense of belonging and safety as a female student at Bethel Seminary.

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Leadership Success Strategies for Women

Diane Kennedy, OP
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A significant portion of my growth in leadership can be attributed to ATS, who opened to me the wider, diverse ecumenical world of theological education. My ten years on the ATS Executive Committee were not only a powerful source of professional development but also a gift of relationships with superb colleagues and delightful companions who offered a constant summons to concern for excellence and innovation. I learned so much in those years, and I gained confidence and learned to trust myself in new ways. It has been a privilege to be called to look back on the mystery of grace at work among us and within our institutions and to attempt to winnow some wisdom from the harvest gathered.

At the beginning of the ATS Women in Leadership initiative, I recall meeting in a hotel conference room with Michael Gilligan, Rosemary Skinner Keller, and three or four other women to conceive the first conference. We knew then and we are certain now that this is a transformational initiative that demands commitment for the long haul. Despite the consistent effort of ATS since that first meeting to promote and prepare women for leadership in theological education, today women represent only 13 percent of the 499 president and dean positions in ATS accredited schools.

But the world of theological education is not radically different from American society. In the US Congress, women represent 16.9 percent of the membership—17 percent in the Senate and 16.8 percent in the House of Representatives. In our fifty states, six governors are women; and in the 100 largest cities of the United States, only seven mayors are women. In cities with populations of more than 100,000, 14.5 percent of the mayoral positions are held by women.

We are part of the real world—the post feminist world of the “Mama Grizzlies.”¹ This is the “GOP Year of the Woman,” and Mama Grizzlies are the marketing image. Granting that both terms are marketing tools of an antigovernment stance that lacks solutions for real problems, we do know that real mama grizzlies are aggressive, irrational, and mean. How did we get here? I ask myself.

But I can't breathe that air too long—surfing the web can be dangerous to your sanity and sensibilities. And trying to figure it all out by rational processes seems futile. For inspiration I turn to poetry—and especially to Mary Oliver, whose “Instructions for living a life” I love:

Pay attention. Be astonished. Tell about it.²

When you are one of two women on the ATS Executive Committee in 1990, you pay attention. You prepare carefully for every meeting; you listen hard, and eventually you realize you are as smart as many of your male colleagues. I learned that it was important to get into the conversation early . . . or gradually

you become invisible or suddenly intrusive when you do intervene, because they had forgotten you were there. Gradually I found my voice—thanks to the “colleagueship” of some marvelous men who valued the gifts of women and truly wanted a different voice in the conversation.

I will attempt to tell about what I learned and how astonishing is the grace at work in the transformation of attitudes and structures as women assume their rightful place in leadership.

As I prepared this essay, I struggled between sharing my personal experience and synthesizing the best literature on women’s leadership. There is a significant body of literature on women in leadership, and I gathered some of the best. But I gradually realized that you can read as well as I can, and perhaps my lived experience of thirty-five years in leadership might be more authentic and helpful.

But one assumption I want to assert before I begin: Leadership can be learned, just as virtue is acquired. Yes, gifts are given and talents are identified and developed, but leadership can be learned, and I am still learning from gifted leaders with whom I serve. The president of Dominican University is in her seventeenth year as president, having assumed office just before her fortieth birthday. She is the first lay woman to serve as president, and she has transformed a struggling liberal arts college with a great tradition into a thriving university with four graduate schools. Her mantra I have quoted: “Absorb chaos, give back calm, inspire confidence.” For Donna Carroll the glass is always half full, though she has a sharp, analytical mind and a genius for strategic planning. She always seems solidly rooted in her own sense of self and keeps the mission and the vision always before us. I pay attention to Donna’s style of leadership, and I know that how one frames an issue or a question makes all the difference if one wants to be heard. If you want to see a successful woman leader, shadow Donna Carroll for a day.

As I looked back on the leadership roles I have held, I realized that there has always been a call, a summons, an invitation, and the result of my saying yes was that I was always thrown in over my head. Yes, others must have identified gifts and possibilities that I was too timid to assert, but in the beginning, I had no choice but to keep swimming. In 1967, just after Vatican II and at the age of thirty-three, I was asked to become formation director of my Dominican congregation. The new prioress—forty years old—said, “We know renewal has to begin with initial formation. We will experiment; if something doesn’t work we will review and revise. But we will all be in this together.” I was a high school English teacher who loved reading theology and loved my Dominican life. But the readiness for imagining a whole new program stopped there. Yet we became a team of talented young sisters with one seasoned member, and we had the trust of the prioress. It was that experience of her trust that gave me the strength and the confidence to explore and learn and risk as we shaped new programs.³

I am now at the point in my life where I have the privilege of working with very gifted thirty- to forty-year-old women and men, and I strive to offer that gift of trust and support.

Following those years in formation ministry, as I finished my doctoral studies, I was asked to head a new project founded to promote collaboration among American Dominican men and women in ministry, research, spirituality, and publications. For this project there was no road map except for my limited experience of collaboration with other Dominican women and men in the renewal of formation programs.

When I began preaching the gospel of collaboration, I did a great deal of research on gender differences in relationships and communication, and many of my presentations were geared to helping women and men understand one another better. I talked a lot about how we are socialized into gender roles—men marked by autonomy, separateness, and self-reliance; women socialized into attachment, affiliation, and connection. I talked about issues of empathy and power, about patriarchy and authority, and how we were being called to move from clericalism, anticlericalism, and sexism to equality, mutuality, and interdependence. Thirty years later I know that we have all been run through that car wash many times over, and we know that the transformation of relationship and gender roles is a lifelong project for each of us within an ongoing cultural and ecclesial earthquake. Knowledge about and understanding of sexual differentiation remain a challenge—demanding layers of knowledge from psychology, sociology, anthropology, theology, philosophy, and gender studies—and yet it refuses to be an exact science.

After ten years of talking about collaboration between women and men and designing retreats and conferences that would “get the folks together” in relationships of mutuality, equality, and interdependence, I became in 1990 the first woman dean of Aquinas Institute of Theology in St. Louis.

The president who offered me the job was a thirty-eight-year-old Dominican priest who had been formed by this intentional collaboration in the Order. Although we were new to the project of shared leadership in theological education, we shared a vision and an innate conviction that we would be peers and would meet on level ground. The faculty would eventually be composed of nine men and nine women—a remarkable gender balance. We had all been shaped by the Dominican tradition of collegiality and democratic government. Charlie understood that the school had to shift into a new mode if it were to survive; he brought to the challenge willingness to risk, the ability to think programmatically, the strong academic instincts of a scholarly teacher, and high energy. I brought experience in administration and governance, a love of Aquinas Institute, a willingness to ask critical questions, a belief in the value of process and thinking together, and a confidence that the Dominican Order (and the Church) was in a process of transformation of relationships for the sake of mission—that we were writing a new chapter with our lives, in effect doing a new deed.

We served together for thirteen years. We grew the school from 100 students to 320, introduced distance learning and three new degree programs, and cherished the fruits of sustained collaboration. By the twelfth year it was clear that the partnership was showing signs of stress and strain. I know that each of us has our shadow side, and when we work together in genuine partnership we come to know both the light and the dark of ourselves and of one

another. If we fail to do our inner work when we are relating within equality and mutuality in a sustained daily way, our shadow side, the monsters deep within, can be released to disturb our peace in ways we don't immediately understand. If partnership is to survive this threshold of strain and tension, attention must be paid to the task of inner work. And it may well be that the partnership cannot survive. It may well be that what worked in the past can no longer work because of the complexities of both context and personalities.

But those thirteen years as dean taught me to keep an open door; that the interruptions are the ministry; that the faculty is a community of scholars to be supported and nurtured; and that recognizing others' gifts, letting my astonishment show at their accomplishments, and telling them what I saw in them was the role of leadership. It also taught me to articulate a vision, develop a strong rationale, invite the faculty into the dream, and then make demands for the sake of mission, for the common good.

As I was stepping down from Aquinas, once again I was invited in over my head. I was invited to become associate provost at Dominican University—and to be the editor of the self-study for the upcoming accreditation. My years on ATS accrediting teams were my only comfort. Initially the work was purely administrative without the stimulation of theological education, and I did at best a mediocre job—but we got a ten-year reaccreditation from the Higher Learning Commission. The provost had been the chief academic officer for nearly forty years, so there was not a lot of energy for innovation. But when a new provost came on, I was freed to become vice president for Mission and Ministry and to once again engage realities of theology and faith and church and mission.

In the five years in this role, I have experienced the importance of what Donna Markham defines as spiritlinking leadership:

The Deliberate and
Untiring Act of
Working through Resistance
to Organizational Transformation
by Building the Circle of Friends,
Fostering Networks of
Human Compassion
and Interweaving Teams of Relationships
through Which New Ideas are Born
and New Ways of Responding
to the Mission
Take Form and Find Expression.⁴

I do believe women's roles in leadership are and can be transformative. But resistance is real. And that is the challenge. Let me describe the context and the challenge of my role. Since the late sixties, Catholic colleges and universities have moved into the mainstream of American higher education. They have welcomed academic, religious, and cultural pluralism within their faculties and have widened the pegs of their tents to include multiple perspectives.

They find themselves in an unnamed world between sectarian and secular. In this world, what does Catholic identity mean and where is it located? How do we define our mission in relation to the Catholic Dominican tradition, and how is the Catholic intellectual tradition integrated or present within the curriculum? Forty years later we are asking, What difference does the difference make? And where is it located? How do we preserve a precious intellectual and spiritual legacy? And because we have had forty years of “leveling,” there is significant resistance to altering the balance of the equation.

My first task was to become a known member of the university community and especially to gain credibility with the faculty. This task involved building relationships: appearing at every event, engaging in the life of the community, taking time to get to know people, and contributing to discussions.

One skill I had developed over the years was identifying smart people for a planning committee, inviting them to help shape a new project, and offering substantive questions to get the conversation started. The intuition I had was that if we explored the meaning of our university motto, *caritas et veritas* (love and truth), from the multiple perspectives of the various disciplines, we would come to a deeper understanding of our mission to pursue truth, give compassionate service, and participate in the creation of a more just and humane world. My goal was a symposium on *caritas et veritas* that would engage the whole university, undergraduate and graduate.

The committee was composed of three deans, seven faculty members, and the associate provost. My intent was to reach across the university and to include key players. I asked them to do what they do best—think and imagine. I provided the planning framework, promised one-hour meetings, got them to articulate how important this could be for the entire university, and continuously reminded them of the vision. By the end of the spring semester we had a plan and a schedule. The plan was three questions: What do *caritas* and *veritas* mean for Catholic higher education in the twenty-first century? How do you understand the pursuit of truth in your research, discipline, teaching, or role at the university? And what’s love got to do with it?

We invited four faculty members to give their responses to these questions as a panel at the beginning of the fall semester, first to the board of trustees and then for faculty and staff. Then we sent out to all a call for proposals for a September 2010 symposium. We received twenty-five proposals involving eighty persons and began planning for a symposium of 300–400 people. We created a logistics committee that involved all the key units of the university—IT, events coordination, caterers, student affairs, theater department, marketing, etc. Once the program was finalized and people realized that our best and brightest professors would be among the presenters in addition to staff in student involvement, university ministry, service learning, and human resources—the heavy hitters, as someone called it—people were saying, this could attract one thousand. And we got eleven hundred, including seven hundred students!

It was a truly collaborative event involving the whole university, and we had more than 225 people to thank for their work as presenters and behind the scenes. The day went off without a hitch, the sky was crystalline blue, and we knew we were blessed. The conclusion was that we must do this every year; this reminds us why we are here, what we are about.

A new idea had assumed reality through the planning committee, and new ways of responding to mission were marvelously articulated through the presentations. It was a day of the Spirit, and for the moment we have known organizational transformation that can open us to fuller, deeper discussions of who we are and why we are.

We invited everyone into the project, and ownership reached across the university. I heard within myself that day what I had heard thirty years before when I was working with the Parable Conference to promote collaboration: “Diane, all I’m asking you to do is get the folks together; I’ll take care of the rest.” So I began to give this some thought: *What’s the role of leadership? Build a network of friends and colleagues, weave teams of relationships through which new ideas can be born, craft challenging questions, and offer a vision. Share responsibility with talented people and trust them.*

I shared the leadership of the symposium with a very talented young director on the brink of turning forty. She has great organizational skills, rapid follow up, boundless energy, brilliant intelligence, and an ability to delegate responsibilities. We were macro and micro, working wonderfully together and both of us continuing to learn. I know that my P on the Myers Briggs can be very difficult for a J—and she was a very high J. But I could say, “We have time to revisit that decision, and let’s see if we might not imagine something even better. Have we considered this option?” And I think I am helping her understand that collaboration is more fruitful and more fun than competition and that transparency does not mean loss of power or authority. Yes, I think I am mentoring her.

I now want to turn directly to successful strategies for women in leadership:

1. **Of foremost importance is a mentor.** You need someone who sees your gifts, knows your potential, and is willing to be your counsel. I had a great mentor when I was director of formation: a sister who was twenty years older, a great scholar, a college president, and then vicaress general of the congregation. A national speaker, she would be writing a talk and ask if she could read it to me and receive suggestions for improvement. She wanted to test new ideas on me and others. She drew me into committees and events that broadened my horizons and stimulated my imagination. She was someone I trusted for advice and wisdom and great good sense.

I am now at the point where I hope I am mentoring new talent, paying attention to their gifts and telling them how astonishing they can be.

2. **Sustained, open communication is essential.** Regular staff or cabinet meetings and weekly one-on-one conferences with those who report to you are essential. Team building is an ongoing, never-finished task. I prepare an agenda for my weekly meeting with the president, and I ask the four directors who report to me to do the same so that our conferences are focused and productive.
3. **Master the art of the apology.** Never hesitate to heal or reconcile—or at least acknowledge and bring an issue out into the open. Gentle firmness is the best *modus operandi*.

4. **Take time to build relationships with your colleagues.** In my last years at Aquinas, Faith Rohrbough, Martha Horne, Rosemary Skinner Keller, and I had come to know each other through ATS, and we decided that we would spend a day together each year sharing what was going on in our lives, telling our stories, seeking one another's wisdom. I think we were only able to fulfill that promise three times, but I remember those conversations as profound and warm and wonderful. What we had in common was that we were women serving as deans and presidents in theological education.
5. **But you also need good friends in your immediate world.** Our model, of course, is Jesus: "I have not called you servants, but friends." We all need those who know us truly and accept us fully, who offer both comfort and challenge. Friendship is a school of virtue. It is a source of abundant grace and also of purification if we are faithful to the process. I love the wisdom with which Adrienne Rich writes about friendship:

An honorable human relationship is a process, delicate, often terrifying to both persons involved, a process of redefining the truths they can tell each other. It is important to do this because it breaks down human self-delusion and isolation. It is important to do this because in so doing we do justice to our own complexity. It is important to do this because we can count on such few people to go that hard way with us.⁵

Good friends show us the way to our best selves. For that gift William Butler Yeats says it best:

Think where man's [woman's] glory most begins and ends,
And say my glory was I had such friends.⁶

6. **Be faithful to study and prayer.** Do so despite the tsunami of work that threatens every day. In stillness there is clarity. Nurture your contemplative core. Thomas Merton wrote:

Contemplation is [spiritual wonder]. It is spontaneous awe at the sacredness of life, of being. It is gratitude for life, for awareness, and for being. It is a vivid realization of the fact that life and being in us proceed from an invisible, transcendent, and infinitely abundant Source.⁷

James Connor, influenced by Merton, speaks of contemplation in *Silent Fire* as "the deep glance, the awakening to a world with dimension, a world that blends with Mystery."⁸ Thus our contemplative study is fed not just by Scriptures and theological texts but by poetry and novels, the splendor of mountains and oceans—all the truth revealed in beauty. Chicago is having a splendid autumn; the trees are ablaze against the crystal-line sky, and for the moment they are holding still, waiting for me to stand still and notice.

7. **Commit yourself to collaboration.** Here Donna Markham offers clarity on the benefits and demands of collaboration:

Effective leadership is about liberation, about loving, about listening, about telling the truth and taking risks, about solidifying the circle of friends for the sake of the mission.⁹

Mission-driven vision, conflict management, community and inner authority . . . become the spiritlinks that usher in transformation. . . . A deep respect for the sacred, along with an unswerving courage to manage conflict, provides the context for leaders to address resistance to global conversion.¹⁰

Inner authority, reverence, and wisdom provide a base for managing conflict and being able to withstand the high levels of frustration felt as firm, rich ground is sought.¹¹

Borrowing words from the Irish writer John O'Donohue, I will end with a blessing:

For a Leader

May you have the grace and wisdom
To act kindly, learning
To distinguish between what is
Personal and what is not.

May you be hospitable to criticism.

May you never put yourself at the center of things.

May you act not from arrogance but out of service.

May you work on yourself,
Building up and refining the ways of your mind.

May those who work for you know
You see and respect them.

May you learn to cultivate the art of presence
In order to engage with those who meet you.

When someone fails or disappoints you,
May the graciousness with which you engage
Be their stairway to renewal and refinement.

May you treasure the gifts of the mind
Through reading and creative thinking

So that you continue as a servant of the frontier
Where the new will draw its enrichment from the old,
And you never become a functionary.

May you know the wisdom of deep listening,
The healing of wholesome words,
The encouragement of the appreciative gaze,
The decorum of held dignity,
The springtime edge of the bleak question.

May you have a mind that loves frontiers
So that you can evoke the bright fields
That lie beyond the view of the regular eye.

May you have good friends
To mirror your blind spots.

May leadership be for you
A true adventure of growth.¹²

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ENDNOTES

1. In an October 27, 2010, article titled "Who are the 'Mama Grizzlies'?" Forbes.com reported Sarah Palin coined the phrase in May to mean "common-sense conservative women, banding together and rising up" to form "an emerging, conservative, feminist identity."
2. Mary Oliver, "Sometimes," part 4, *Red Bird: Poems* (Boston: Beacon Press, 2008), 37.
3. Strangely enough, in the Catholic world, religious life was a place where women could assume leadership in their schools, colleges, and hospitals, as well as in their congregations. And, oh yes, there is now the Apostolic Visitation.
4. Donna J. Markham, *Spiritlinking Leadership: Working Through Resistance to Organizational Change* (Mahwah, NJ: Paulist Press, 1999), 5.
5. Adrienne Rich, "Honorable Human Relationship," *Women and Honor: Some Notes on Lying* (San Francisco: Cleis Press, 1977).
6. William Butler Yeats, "The Municipal Gallery Revisited," *New Poems* (1938).
7. Thomas Merton, *New Seeds of Contemplation* (New York: New Directions Publishing, 1961), 1.
8. James A. Connor, *Silent Fire: Bringing the Spirituality of Silence to Everyday Life* (New York: Crown Publishers, 2002).
9. Markham, *Spiritlinking Leadership*, 11.
10. *Ibid.*, 132.
11. *Ibid.*, 133.
12. John O'Donohue, "For a Leader," *To Bless the Space Between Us: A Book of Blessings* (New York: Doubleday, 2008), 151–152.

Theological Education Submission Guidelines

Theological Education, the journal of The Association of Theological Schools and The Commission on Accrediting of ATS, is devoted to the distinctive concerns of graduate theological education in North America. The journal supports the mission of the Association and the Commission by providing those concerned with theological education—including administrators, faculty, and independent researchers—with scholarly discourse and reports on issues and trends, research findings and resources, and models of critical analysis and effective practices in graduate theological education.

Format of the Journal: Theme Focus and Open Forum

The **theme focus** section of the journal contains articles that have been **solicited** by the editors or the editorial board. These articles address current topics and issues in theological education, identified areas of the Association's work, and/or reports of work undertaken by ATS projects.

Unsolicited submissions are generally considered for publication in the **open forum** section. These articles may focus on any of a variety of subjects related to graduate, professional theological education in North America. The open forum may also include articles drawn from presentations at ATS leadership education events and other Association venues in order to make them more widely available.

Submission Guidelines

Theological Education invites submissions of articles that are consistent with the journal's purposes as enumerated in its mission statement. Unsolicited submissions are reviewed by at least two members of the editorial board, who make recommendations to the editors regarding their publication. The editorial board will not consider articles that are being submitted simultaneously to other publications.

1. Recommended length of articles is 3,750 words (approximately 15 double-spaced pages).
2. Follow *Chicago Manual of Style*, 16th ed., using one-inch margins, left justification, and endnotes. Convert footnotes to endnotes.
3. Write in the third-person form when possible.
4. If quoting Scripture, include the Bible translation with each reference.
5. The *American Heritage Dictionary* and the *Canadian Oxford Dictionary* are the references for preferred spellings.
6. Provide a paragraph abstract of approximately 80 words at the beginning of the article.
7. Add a short (2–3 sentence) paragraph at the end of the article identifying the author(s), institution or relationship to the project/topic, position held, and/or other information relevant to the experience of the writer(s).
8. Submissions should be emailed to editors@ats.edu.

Responses to prior articles are encouraged and are published at the discretion of the editors. The suggested length for a reader response is 1,500 words; responses may be edited for length.

Author's Checklist

1. The audience for *Theological Education* includes people from multiple academic disciplines and diverse religious traditions, who share in common their work as theological educators. Have you written with this audience in mind?
2. Is the article timely? Does it contribute significantly to current interdisciplinary discourse about theological education?
3. Does the subject matter represent new ideas or experiences that colleagues at other theological schools can incorporate into their teaching or administration?
4. Will the article spark useful debate on the topic?
5. Is the article well-written with a clear focus and well-developed/supported arguments?
6. Is the research methodology sound and appropriate?
7. If applicable, does the article make accurate use of the data available from ATS and other sources?
8. Does the article conform to the submission guidelines listed above?

