EXPLORING THE FIRST-YEAR TRANSITION EXPERIENCES OF WOMEN DEPARTMENT CHAIRS

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A DISSERTATION

Submitted to
Michigan State University
in partial fulfillment of the requirements
for the degree of

Higher, Adult, and Lifelong Education – Doctor of Philosophy

2025

ABSTRACT

Gmelch and Mishkin (2004) shared that "higher education will continue to have a "leadership crisis" as long as chairing a department remains an unmanageable and unproductive option for faculty members" (p. 132). For a role that has been referred to as a lynchpin in the university (Cipriano, 2011), faculty often try to avoid the chair role because they do not want to deal with the stress of the role or have to worry about falling behind in their research. For many individuals who assume the chair role, this is their first foray into leadership. While faculty are trained to be leaders in their disciplines, very few are prepared with the skills they need to step into formal leadership roles.

Over the last few decades, the number of women receiving doctoral degrees has reached gender parity, yet the number of women advancing into academic leadership roles has not experienced the same growth. As individuals stepping into the chair role may already experience a shift in identity from faculty to leadership, this study focused on understanding how women perceived their transition from faculty to chair. Eight women department chairs were identified from a conference of R1 institutions and participated in this qualitative study examining the challenges and successes of their lived experiences throughout their first-year in the role. Schlossberg's Transition Theory combined with Gmelch and Buller's Framework for Developing Academic Leaders guided the data collection. Narrative analysis was used to examine stories the women chairs shared and identify common themes.

The experiences the women shared were diverse; however, the most common theme they all discussed related to the transition being a time of learning. While initial conversations focused on learning specific tasks and responsibilities of the job, the learning process extended to self-discovery for the women around who they are as leaders and how their first-year experience

developed their leadership capacity. In addition to learning traditional aspects of the chair role, the women and those who held additional intersecting minoritized identities found they had to learn how to manage the hidden work related to age, race, or ability.

Analyzing the stories of the women chairs revealed several implications for approaches to help make the role more manageable by initiating new learning strategies and exploring how the role could be reimagined. This study provides recommendations for those in institutional leadership roles, current faculty development practitioners, and for the new chairs themselves. While women were the focus of the study, suggestions discussed have implications for anyone stepping into a department chair role

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

In a role where the work seems to multiply, I am extremely thankful for the women chairs who offered up the precious resource of time to participate in this study. Openly sharing their stories and allowing me to be a part of their journey was a privilege for me, both as a researcher and, above all, as a fellow woman. When I initially started this project, I had an idea of where I wanted to go, but as I listened to the unique experiences of these strong and dedicated women, I was deeply impacted in a way I could never have imagined.

To my advisor, Dr. Ann Austin, thank you for your patience and guidance over the last many years. Your thoughtfulness and commitment to helping me succeed in this process were extremely appreciated. To my advisors behind the scenes, Drs. Marilyn Amey and Allyn Shaw, thank you for the time you spent encouraging me just to keep moving forward. Furthermore, I am grateful to my committee members, Drs. Brendan Cantwell, and Sonja Fritzsche, for their guidance in exploring new approaches and areas I may have overlooked, which helped me expand my way of thinking.

All of this would not have been possible without the help of friends and family. From the start of my education, my parent's encouragement and support have been with me and have kept me moving forward. I never envisioned pursuing a doctorate, but Deb DeZure helped to nurture the idea and allowed me to see that I could achieve this goal. Finally, to the one person who has had to live with me throughout this journey, I thank my husband, Quentin, for his love, reassurance, motivation, and sometimes commiseration, which have helped me achieve this massive milestone.

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CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION

Academic leadership positions in higher education are typically researched in three categories: presidents, provosts, and chancellors at the university level, deans at the college level, and chairs of departments (Ruben et al., 2017). While all these positions have their complexities and difficulties, the department chair role is often touted as "probably the most important, least appreciated, and toughest administrative position(s) in higher education" (Buller, 2012, p. 3). Individuals who step into these roles are typically highly regarded scholars, yet few have prior administrative experience. In fact, "academic leadership is one of the few professions one can enter today with absolutely no training in, credentials for, or knowledge about the central duties of the position" (Gmelch & Buller, 2015, p. 2). Research on department chairs is not as plentiful as that focusing on presidents or deans, and it has only recently developed over the past three decades. Much of the research conducted focuses on the responsibilities and skills needed for individuals stepping into these critical positions, with little attention devoted to the lived experiences of chairs, let alone how gender or other demographic factors affect that experience.

The role of the department chair is often a faculty member's first foray into academic leadership (Booth, 1982; Gmelch & Miskin, 2004), and those assuming the role are not all on the same career trajectory. Some faculty members enter the role with hopes of moving into other leadership roles, such as dean, provost, or even president. Others step into the position with the feeling that they are serving their department and plan to return to their faculty rank as soon as their term ends (Hancock, 2007). In fact, 65% of faculty step away from the role after their first term (Gmelch, 2016). While some of this can be attributed to a desire to resume their teaching and research and avoid administrative headaches, others never develop a sense of competence in

the role, despite wanting to remain in leadership (Weaver et al., 2019). The differences in career goals only adds to the complexities of supporting individuals in these roles.

An examination of the current literature on department chairs (and higher education leaders more broadly) reveals a concerning underrepresentation of women in leadership positions (McGuire, 2019; Kruse, 2022; Shepherd, 2017). As of 2017, women account for "slightly more than a quarter of all full professors and less than 15 percent of the presidents at doctoral degree-granting institutions" (Johnson, 2017, p.1). Previously, there was not a sufficient number of women in the "pipeline" who were qualified to take on leadership roles; however, since 1987, women have accounted for 50% of master's degrees and, since 2006, 50% of doctoral degrees (Johnson, 2017). Despite these increases in degrees granted, there has not been equivalent growth in the number of women holding academic leadership positions.

Defining Academic Leadership

A knowledge of academic leadership needs to be established to better understand the complexities of the department chair role. Leadership is a term with numerous definitions and theories, and the approaches to developing leaders vary significantly (Kjellström et al., 2020; Ruben et al., 2017; Kouzes & Posner, 2002). The Merriam-Webster dictionary defines leadership as "1: a position as a leader of a group or organization, 2: the time when a person holds the position of leader, and 3: the power or ability to lead other people" (Merriam-Webster, n.d.). While much of this is true in academic leadership, Gmelch and Buller (2015) summarize three aspects that best describe the differences between leadership and academic leadership:

1. Academic leadership builds a community of scholars.
2. Academic leadership sets the direction for either an entire institution or a unit of that institution.

3. Academic leadership empowers others (p. 42-43).

Leadership exercised in a top-down fashion is ineffective when overseeing scholars and teachers with a particular expertise (Bolman & Gallos, 2011). To build a community that works in higher education, attention must be given to respecting "scholarly values like academic freedom and the importance of research integrity" (Bolman & Gallos, 2011, p. 42). Even though academic leadership "sets" a direction, it does not mean it is imposed or controlled from one position. Instead, faculty "attain levels of individual autonomy and collective power beyond most employees in other sectors" (Bollman & Gallos, 2011, p. 7). This unique approach empowers faculty by recognizing that they possess the level of expertise necessary to effectively run an academic enterprise that relies on creative activity for research and teaching. Through all three of these, the common element reflected is shared governance, which distributes power among the faculty. While the level of faculty and staff interaction in the governance process varies by institution, its presence can create complications for leaders as they strive to balance their own decision-making processes (Bolman & Gallos, 2011). Navigating the line between when to seek faculty input on an issue versus making a decision independently is an area new chairs will need to be continuously aware of, especially if they are learning the culture at a new institution or managing the evolving relationships that come with being promoted within their own unit.

Problem Statement

In American higher education, the role of department chair emerged in the 19th century during a period of "tension, fragmentation, and competition" (Booth, 1982, p. 5). When examining the responsibilities and stressors of chairs over the past few decades, it appears that little has changed in terms of the tasks; however, the stress of the job has increased, with some individuals advocating that it has become even more complex (Gmelch, 2017). While the tasks

and responsibilities may be classified similarly to those of years past, the elements required to complete those duties have increased, with many becoming multifaceted. One such example is that higher education institutions face an increased need for compliance with government regulations and other stakeholders. New policies and procedures emerge for which faculty must be accountable, and the department chair is often the one tasked with ensuring they comply (Gmelch & Miskin, 2004).

Research studies have examined the skills and competencies needed to effectively navigate and manage these positions, yet the role continues to increase in complexity, accompanied by higher turnover rates (Gmelch, 2016; Cipriano, 2016). Department chairs serve as a conduit for their dean and other upper administrators (Lucas, 1986) while also acting as the protector of their fellow faculty in the department (Booth, 1982). Depending on the type of institution or department they serve, they may need to continue teaching classes or maintain an active research portfolio (Gmelch & Miskin, 2004). Since many department chairs lack formal training before assuming their roles, the transition into the position can involve an extremely steep learning curve. This learning curve is sometimes compounded by the lack of a formal job description (Cipriano, 2016). Despite having little to no previous training and often no job description, there is an expectation that when a faculty member assumes a formal administrative role, they will be able to manage the job with little to no help because of their success as a scholar (Montgomery, 2020; Gmelch & Miskin, 2004; Ruben et al., 2017).

While department chair training has become increasingly available, it often focuses on the specific skills needed to manage the job and overlooks the numerous factors that can be at play during a transition. William Bridges (2003) defines a transition as a psychological process "that people go through as they internalize and come to terms with details of the new situation

that the change brings about" (p. 3). A transition from faculty member to department chair is not only a new job but is a new identity that some faculty may hesitate to embrace (Hecht, 1999). If the transition to department chair can be improved, the process will need to address the holistic effects an individual undergoes as they assume this role, rather than just focusing on the tasks. Michael Watkins, author of *The First 90 Days* (2013), researches transitions focusing on the corporate environment; however, many ideas translate into any leadership career transition. He notes that leadership transitions can be the most challenging time in a professional's life, and what happens during the leadership transition can set the tone for the leader's career. "Even though a bad transition does not necessarily doom you to failure, it makes success a lot less likely" (p. 1).

Research continually supports the claims that serving as a department chair is complex, no matter one's identity or demographics; however, there are additional studies that suggest women serving in these roles face added tensions (Kruse, 2022; Gmelch et al., 2018; Johnson, 2021; Mullen, 2009). Cultural and structural barriers like the "glass ceiling" and "glass cliff" are genuine when examining hurdles for increasing the presence of women and other underrepresented groups in academic leadership positions (Kruse, 2022). The glass ceiling refers to an invisible barrier that hinders the advancement of minoritized groups despite being qualified for the position (Kruse, 2022). The glass cliff is a newer phenomenon that promotes women into positions in high-risk situations. With the glass ceiling hindering opportunities for advancement, women are more likely to take a leadership role in an organization facing complex problems or navigating extreme change (Ryan & Haslam, 2007). As it is becoming harder to attract individuals to take on the department chair role because of its complexities and tensions (Lucas, 1994), the glass cliff metaphor is reflective of how women often step in and take on these

positions, many in an interim capacity, despite it not being the best timing for their career. Some of this may be related to leadership aspirations, but much of what motivates women to step into these roles is a desire to serve the department (Kruse, 2022).

In my role, I work closely with department chairs daily and observe the struggles they face and how departmental culture is impacted when a chair is not performing their job effectively. It can be exceptionally hard for a new chair because of the expectation that they must know everything about the job as soon as they assume the role and are not provided a real chance to orient themselves. Unlike faculty members, who are given seven years to achieve tenure and typically another seven years to achieve the rank of full professor and become recognized as an expert in the field, chairs are expected to possess full knowledge of the role as soon as they assume the position (Gmelch & Buller, 2015). While it is doubtful that a handbook could be developed to tell chairs precisely what to do in each situation, those of us in positions that help develop chairs try to lessen their burden by creating workshops and other resources that provide information, tools, and access to support networks.

More recently, higher education has felt the effects of the "great resignation," with faculty and academic staff deciding to leave for other institutions or stepping away from the academy altogether (Fidelity Investments, 2021; McClure & Fryar, 2022). In February 2021, a survey of faculty reported that 55% were considering leaving higher education, and 35% of those held tenure system positions (Fidelity Investments, 2021). While some of the resignation discussions appear to have leveled off, there is also a notable level of disengagement among faculty. Individuals still care about their work, but connections with the institution are weakening (McClure & Fryar, 2022). Dealing with limited resources in higher education is commonplace, and leaders are often asked to do more with less to help their department, college, and the overall

institution. As we continue to navigate the effects of the COVID-19 pandemic, resource constraints in terms of budgets and human capital are more prominent than ever and only add to the complexity leaders face (Kruse et al., 2020). As a result, attracting leaders to take on middle management roles, such as department chair, becomes even more difficult because there is no perceived incentive to step away from the research or teaching one finds meaningful to take on a seemingly thankless job.

Tensions Between Faculty and Administration

Higher education institutions operate differently from other industries in various ways, but the most prominent variance is shared governance (Birnbaum, 1988). Instead of power residing in one specific position, "decision-making is spread among trustees, presidents, and faculty (Carnegie Foundation for the Advancement of Teaching, 1982 as cited in Birnbaum, 1988). In Robert Birnbaum's "How Colleges Work" (1988), he discusses how changes to higher education increased the number of faculty moving into administrative positions and not returning to the faculty. (These were typically the roles of assistant or associate dean, or dean, more so than a department chair.) Part of this need stemmed from the roles evolving and becoming more complex, requiring considerable time and attention, which the average faculty member cannot devote. With this change, a distinct chasm between faculty and those in administration became even more prominent. Faculty viewed those in management as creating bureaucratic structures that make it seem as though they are "more remote from central academic concerns that define the institution" (Birnbaum, 1988, p. 7). For administrators, faculty were viewed as "self-interested, unconcerned with controlling costs, or unwilling to respond to legitimate requests for accountability" (p. 7).

While higher education institutions moved to employ more full-time administrators, governance still remained a shared responsibility among the academic community (Birnbaum, 1988). In 1966, the American Association of University Professors (AAUP) issued a "Statement of Government of Colleges and Universities," which provides a guide for how faculty, administrators, students, and other stakeholders should participate in the governance of their institutions (American Association of University Professors, 1966). This statement gave faculty the primary responsibility "for the fundamental areas of curriculum, instruction, faculty status, and the academic aspects of student life" (Birnbaum, 1988, p.8). The problem with this is that an administrative hierarchy still operates within the institution, creating a "dual system of control" that leads to confusion and conflict within the organizational system (Birnbaum, 1988, p. 10). Thus, faculty and administration are sometimes pitted against each other, as they individually feel that the other is not looking out for the institution's best interests. Faculty see their colleagues who leave the faculty ranks and move into leadership as rejecting their intellectual pursuits, becoming "a traitor to your discipline" and "going to the dark side" (DeZure et al., 2014, p. 38). For other faculty, the role of the department chair is often viewed as a gateway that may or may not be seen within the same context as higher-level administrative positions and is sometimes perceived as "joining forces with the devil" (DeZure et al., 2014, p. 38). There is even the idea that suggesting a faculty member participate in leadership training could be perceived as insulting, as they are already regarded as scholarly leaders in their respective fields (Ruben et al., 2017). The role of the chair is often perceived as a form of service and not necessarily viewed as a promotion into a management position, as those from another field may see it. Because of this connotation, some chairs do not fully invest in the role; instead, they use their finite time to

continue their research rather than developing the skills or networks needed to be an effective chair (Hecht, 1999).

Gender disparities also add to the complexities of the role (Johnson, 2021). Women stepping into leadership in any field have similar experiences when power dynamics shift and how they function as leaders does not match the expectations others have for them (Kruse, 2022). Female department chairs, staff, faculty, and students all have differing opinions on how they should operate in the role, many of which relate to caregiving or being perceived as "housewives" (Mullen, 2009, p.23). With such a diverse and opposing series of associations attributed to academic leadership, it is not surprising that faculty hesitate about moving into administration and may not have the most accurate conceptual understanding of what the role entails.

Purpose of the Study

This study examined the experiences of new women department chairs as they transitioned from faculty to department chairs at RI Doctoral Universities. For many, stepping into the role of department chair constitutes a significant life event marked by various structural and emotional changes (Hecht, 1999). While there has been an increase in research about department chairs, little attention has been given to the experience of women faculty members as they transition into the department chair role within their first year. Transition theory, as presented by Schlossberg (1981), provides a frame to explore the variety of factors that can play a role during a transition process and helps us understand more about the level of influence those factors have on the situation. Combining this with a model for developing successful academic leaders provides a way to investigate how these distinct factors emerge during the transition process and identify areas of alignment or tension. As the time chairs serve continues to decline and the role becomes

more complex, finding ways to assist new chairs transitioning into this critical role is crucial. This study contributes to the literature on leadership development and the onboarding process for women department chairs by examining the multiple factors involved in a transition.

Using Gmelch and Buller's (2015) model for developing academic leaders combined with Schlossberg's Transition theory (Schlossberg et al., 1995), interviews with department chairs serving at R1 institutions during their first year in the role provided insights into the different components of their transition as academic leaders. The following research questions guided the study:

- Research Question: What are the lived experiences of new women department chairs, in terms of challenges and successes, as they transition into their new professional role over the course of their first year?
    - Sub-question 1: During the period of their first year as a department chair, in what ways do the challenges and successes they experience relate to each of three important domains of effective academic leadership development (i.e., Conceptual Understanding, Skill Development and Reflective Practice)?
    - Sub-question 2: In what ways and to what extent do key factors associated with transition theory relate to the transition process new women chairs experience?
    - Sub-question 3: Are there other factors that relate to the transition experience of women department chairs throughout their first year?

Examining the overall experience of a woman department chair's first year through the lens of a transition theory provided a way to focus beyond what happens within the work context when assuming this new role. Exploring the holistic experiences of department chairs during this transition reveals elements that impact their development as academic leaders. Many studies on

academic leaders, specifically chairs, do not go beyond the surface level. For instance, a study of new department chairs found that those with larger departments were less likely to participate in professional development opportunities (Weaver et al., 2019). However, the exact reason why they are not participating has not been explored. With so many variables at play, using transition theory combined with a framework for developing effective academic leaders provided a way to organize the experiences of a set of new chairs and understand the underlying reasons behind what is happening, with a specific focus on the role gender plays in their transition.

Research Approach

A qualitative research methodology was used to capture the transition experiences of new women chairs. I conducted in-depth interviews as the primary method of inquiry, paired with a narrative and thematic analysis of the data to investigate this topic. This approach aligns with the constructivist paradigm, which seeks to understand how individuals construct their experiences (Sipe & Constable, 1996). Erickson (1986) presents a convincing case for this type of research, as it can provide a voice for those who are often not given a platform to articulate their needs and perspectives, which are sometimes overlooked in other research approaches. As a researcher using a constructivist paradigm, I had the assumption that there was no single truth to be discovered; instead, a multitude of perceptions regarding the transition of women department chairs needed to be uncovered (Glesne, 2011).

In this study, semi-structured interviews were used to explore the lived experiences of women department chairs at two points during their first year**.** Within the constructivist paradigm, ontology is referred to as "a world in which reality is socially constructed, complex, and ever-changing" (Glesne, 2011, p.8). To capture this evolving understanding, two interviews were conducted to gain a more comprehensive picture of their experience, while also

acknowledging their current stage in the transition process. Using thematic analysis to analyze the data allowed me, as the researcher, the opportunity to immerse myself in the data, or stories, from the interviews to find patterns or themes, yet to go "beyond identifying the general or the norm" (Glesne, 2011, p. 188). It was also crucial to be vigilant for tensions that might have otherwise gone unnoticed by me as a researcher (Glesne, 2011).

Significance of the Study

While the role of department chair has been stated as being "at the heart of the tension" between an institution's academic enterprises and managerial functions (Gmelch & Burns, 1990, p. 1), the research around this key position is not as prominent as that around other academic administrators such as deans, chancellors, or provosts. Contemporary research on the department chair role provides a foundation of the basic job responsibilities, demographics, and stressors; however, aspects that begin to venture into the effects the position has on an individual are mostly anecdotal (Gmelch & Miskin, 2011; Weaver et al., 2019). Even less attention has been given to the noticeable lack of diversity in these positions at R1 institutions.

Just as different higher education institution types have different foci, the role of the department chair varies accordingly (Berdrow, 2010). Those serving at research universities will have a different portfolio from that of their colleagues at community colleges or even liberal arts institutions (Cipriano, 2016; Craig, 2005). While all chairs have complex roles, for this study, I focused on the experience of those chairs at R1 universities, specifically within a conference of public Midwest institutions.

By examining the first-year transition experience of new women chairs from within a specific conference of public RI institutions, this study contributes to the literature on this role and the women leaders who navigate its complexities. Understanding the impact of the transition

on an individual provides others a better conceptualization of what their own transition might look like while also helping those in faculty affairs or professional development roles identify ways to assist with the transition process. When academic leaders are not prepared and supported in their roles, the program, the institution, and individuals all suffer (Gmelch & Buller, 2015)

Summary and Preview of Next Chapters

This chapter stated the research problem related to the need to understand the transition of new women department chairs as they experience their first year. The next chapter will discuss literature about department chairs and women's career paths in higher education. Research on how leadership transitions occur outside of academia, along with the conceptual framework guiding the study, will also be detailed. Chapter 3 will explore the methodology and methods guiding the study in conjunction with my positionality as a researcher. It will conclude by detailing the steps that will used to complete the study. Chapter 4 will provide a comprehensive overview of the study's findings and their connection to the guiding frameworks. Detailed analysis of the narratives the women chairs experienced will be shared in Chapter 5, and Chapter 6 will provide a summary and implications from the study.

CHAPTER 2: REVIEW OF LITERATURE

Department chairs play a crucial role in higher education, overseeing a range of job responsibilities. While their responsibilities have not changed significantly over the past thirty years, there has been a notable increase in the stressors associated with the job (Gmelch, 2017). Along with the amplified stress, there is also an increase in turnover rates of those who leave the role, with 65% returning to their faculty positions after serving as department chair (Gmelch, 2016). While many of the stressors may be associated with the structure of the job or the desire to return to the purity of faculty work, little attention has been given to the transition process chairs undergo in their first year and how several factors play a role in helping an individual acclimate.

Understanding how demographic factors influence this process also provides insight into how certain groups, specifically women in this study, navigate the complexities of understanding and operating in the department chair role. This literature review provides a foundation to better understand the role of the department chair, including preparations for assuming the role and an examination of the common responsibilities and stressors that the position regularly encounters. Research on the differences in the academic career paths of women in higher education, along with an exploration of how the type of institution affects their roles, will provide additional context for this study. In addition, non-academic leadership transitions are discussed, along with leadership development and the role of these programs in transitions.

University Department Chairs

The role of a higher education department chair is one of the "most misunderstood management positions in the United States" (Gmelch et al., 2017, p. 1). Situated in the middle of the organizational hierarchy, the department chair typically reports to a dean, who in turn reports

to a provost or chancellor. As is true with most academic administrator positions in higher education, the average tenure of chairs continues to decrease, with the average time in the role currently at three to four years (Gmelch, 2017).

The term “middle manager” applies to this role in the general sense and takes on a different meaning within the academic institution. Powers typically reserved for formal leaders in other types of organizations are delegated to “faculty and staff working within committees, departments, senates, and other faculty and staff bodies in a model of shared governance” (Ruben et al., 2017, p. 147). Although they sit in a somewhat compromised position, chairs are directly responsible for departmental culture, affecting faculty hires and inherently impacting students in the type of teaching and learning they receive (Gmelch et al., 2017). Even with distributed power, the department chair is responsible for making 80% of the decisions directly affecting their department's faculty, staff, and students (Caroll & Wolverton, 2004).

Faculty members who step into leadership positions also have a unique interpretation of how they view these roles. Chairs commonly think of themselves as still part of the faculty, with only 4% identifying solely as administrators (Gmelch et al., 2017). Others characterize themselves as “casual administrators” (González, 2010, pg. 6), so they are still viewed as faculty members first. Most chairs assume the role on a rotational basis, “reluctantly accepted as “my turn in the barrel” (Seagren et al., 1993, p. 16). Stepping into the role, chairs are often unaware of the complex responsibilities awaiting them (Weaver et al., 2019). They also try not to exercise power over the colleagues they will have to work with as peers when they are no longer in the role (Lucas, 1994).

History of the Role

The role of department chair has been fraught with complexity and tension since its inception (Booth, 1982). While there is not a single historical event that distinguishes the establishment of the chair role, Vacik and Miller (1998) connect the development of the role to a few critical incidents in American higher education. Between 1870-1925, the Progressive Era influenced society with "the rise of urbanization, immigration, and industrialization, all of which profoundly impacted the development of American public education, including institutions of higher education" (Vacik & Miller, 1998, p. 6). Federal legislation played a significant role in pushing universities to compartmentalize the different disciplines as vocational education became more prominent (Vacik & Miller, 1998). Booth (1982) discussed how, during the same period, the end of the "prescribed classical curriculum" combined with the emergence of new disciplines led to the fragmentation of higher education into units that were easier for faculty to manage (p. 4). Due to these significant organizational changes, the role of the department chair emerged and became a critical role in the effectiveness of higher education institutions (Vacik & Miller, 1998).

Institution and Disciplinary Differences

While department chairs share foundational elements at all higher education institutions, the range of responsibilities varies depending on institution type and discipline (Becher, 1994; Clark, 1989; Cipriano, 2016). As of 2021, the Carnegie Classification of Institutions of Higher Education recognized 33 distinct institutional types among over 3,900 higher education institutions. The Carnegie framework outlined the diversity of institutions by examining total research expenditures and the amount and types of degrees awarded. For the purposes of this study, only R1 Doctoral Universities were examined due to the added complexity of having

"very high research activity" (Indiana University Center for Postsecondary Research, 2021). The level of research productivity is central to the mission of these institutions. It is a core responsibility for department chairs, as they work to support their colleagues while continuing their own research (Kruse, 2022).

A recent study analyzing survey data from faculty representing various institutional types found that while the source of workload for academics may vary between institutional types, the assumption that teaching-intensive institutions are better places for work-life balance is not absolute (Berheide et al., 2022). While graduate students are socialized to the idea of the fast-paced and demanding nature of working at research institutions, many women choose not to pursue that career path because they desire to have a family and do not see many examples of what that would look like. The 2020 study found that faculty at research universities often receive more support in navigating work-life issues than their counterparts at teaching institutions. However, the false assumptions about the lack of balance keep women from advancing their academic careers. This finding constitutes one layer in the leaky pipeline that reduces the number of women academics working at research universities and directly impacts the pool of women who step into leadership positions (Berheide et al., 2022, p. 444).

Diving into the institutions, different disciplines have their own cultures and provide a "social framework" for examining higher education (Becher, 1994, p. 151). Disciplinary cultures exist within the context of their institutions and provide connections across higher education (Becher, 1994). Becher (1994) provided a framework for grouping disciplines into four areas that provides a foundation for aligning the experiences of department chairs. Becher's groupings are organized as follows: natural or hard-pure sciences; humanities and social sciences; science-based professions or applied hard sciences; and social professions or soft-applied social sciences

(Becher, 1994). Since the sample for this study encompasses a variety of disciplines, it is essential not to overlook the role that disciplinary culture plays in the experience of a new chair.

Demographics of the Role

With the Baby Boomer generation retiring in masse, institutions can no longer wait for faculty to reach full professor before pulling them into administrative roles (King, 2008). What was once a role primarily held by full professors (80% in 1999) or faculty who had already achieved tenure (92.5 %), by 2016, those holding the role were comprised of only 59% full professors and 80% were tenured (Gmelch et al., 2017). As more faculty take on leadership roles before reaching full professor, additional pressure to continue their scholarship for promotion can add to the already stressful job. A shift in gender was also notable in the survey results, with males holding 90% of the chair roles in 1991, compared to only 45% in 2016 (Gmelch et al., 2017). While this survey showed a significant increase in women in these roles, these data did not match a small subset of data gathered from the institutions used in this study. I posit that since this was a voluntary survey, the number of women responding skewed the sample rather than indicating a drastic increase. The number of women in higher academic leadership positions is increasing; however, according to various studies, the rate of growth does not support this substantial increase (Kruse, 2022; Johnson, 2021; Mellon, 2009). Using one research-intensive (RI) institution as an example, approximately 25% of department heads identify as women, a proportion that has remained relatively unchanged over the last 20 years.

While significant changes were observed in survey respondents' faculty rank and gender, the same is not true for race and ethnicity. Gmelch et al (2017) found that 96% of chairs identified as white in 1991 compared to 85% in 2016. Despite the increase in diversity among faculty members, there was a noticeable lack of growth in the number of chairs from

underrepresented minority groups. González (2010) discusses how the changing role of administrators in higher education is creating more issues in attracting and retaining a diverse set of candidates to serve in these roles. Much of the research around the chair role does not directly address demographics; however, these are essential variables to examine when determining effective training methods and topics that could help recruit and retain a more diverse cohort of chairs, potentially influencing the transition process they experience.

Women Department Chairs. With so much variation in the job descriptions of department chairs across institutions and disciplines, disparities in the role impact women differently than their male colleagues (Johnson, 2021). Stereotypical gender-based leadership styles contribute to the perceptions of women in leadership positions, and many play out in departmental leadership. Female leadership styles tend to focus more on interpersonal relationships and have distributed or cooperative approaches, whereas male leaders come from a place of control and competition (Mullen, 2009). Any leader stepping into a leadership position may not match the expectations of those they lead; however, women face even harsher criticisms when their behaviors do not align with those thoughts (Mullen, 2009). This holds true for women department chairs, and depending on the department's culture, the chair role can quickly become encumbering if boundaries are not clearly defined (Kruse, 2022).

Distinctions of the Department Chair Role

While chairs are the epitome of middle management, there is a history of chairs resisting training due to the connotation of the term manager within industry (Lucas, 1986). There are definite correlations between managers being responsible for budget, personnel, and other managerial and leadership tasks; however, significant examples distinguish academic department chairs at RI institutions from all other careers, specifically the need to maintain their scholarship

and participate in shared governance (Berdrow, 2010). The Roman god Janus, who had two faces looking in opposite directions, is used as an example of how chairs find themselves split between the responsibilities of their administrative role, impeding them from attending to their own research, scholarship, and teaching (Gmelch & Miskin, 2004). The duality of the role creates a steep learning curve, especially for those chairs who have not previously held a formal leadership position (Gmelch et al., 2017). Assuming the role of department chair also requires a shift in thinking that is no longer solely focused on their own scholarship. Graduate school prepares faculty to become researchers, independently focused on their own work; however, to have an effective department, the chair must be purposeful in devoting attention to supporting their colleagues in their research and teaching endeavors (Weaver et al., 2019).

The complexities of the chair role only increase when examining the selection process. From having the dean appoint the chair, to being elected by the faculty, to using a selection committee, one commonality has been selecting a chair based on their prominence as a researcher and not their leadership capabilities (Lucas, 1994). In some cases, these individuals are more likely to think of the role as service and may or may not wish to remain in an administrative role. While more institutions move towards a formal selection process with a committee to review both internal and external applicants to find the best candidate, this is often the first formal leadership position a faculty member experiences (Weaver et al., 2019).

Preparation of Chairs

Faculty members are trained to be leaders in their field. At RI institutions, their main responsibilities are to be independent researchers who acquire grants and develop and share new knowledge through teaching students (Lucas, 1999). Understandably, the socialization most graduate students receive focuses primarily on aspects of becoming faculty members; however,

there is a notable lack of attention to developing leadership skills that are not directly tied to their scholarship (Gmelch & Buller, 2015). Reward and evaluation systems for faculty members reinforce the need to focus their time on research and teaching, and few develop the capacity for moving into leadership positions (Hancock, 2007). Unfortunately, when faculty step into leadership roles, many are unprepared to deal with budgets, human resources issues, and developing long-range plans while simultaneously balancing the demands from the dean above and the faculty below (Booth, 1982; Gmelch & Buller, 2015). One would think that leaders who step into these roles receive significant training and support, but this is not consistently the case. Even when training is offered, it is essential to acknowledge that faculty have seven years to demonstrate proficiency in their field, and Malcolm Gladwell posits that it takes 10,000 hours for someone to be considered an expert (Gmelch & Buller, 2015). As Gmelch et al. (2017) so thoughtfully asked, why are chairs expected to have all the skills they need after attending a couple of workshops?

For those without leadership training, there can be a vulnerability in asking for help. There is also the complexity of no longer being able to talk with your "friends" in the department more than others, so you are not viewed as having favorites (DeZure et al., 2014). Sometimes, you are not even allowed to share things with faculty in your department, especially regarding personnel issues. This often leads to feelings of isolation, with many chairs feeling like they are struggling in their units alone **(**Hecht, 1999**).**

Over the last 25 years, training for chairs has increased, although not to the extent one might expect, given the importance of the role. In a 2016 survey of 305 department chairs, two-thirds reported receiving no formal training from their institutions, and of the remaining one-third who did receive training, 72% completed only 10 hours or less (Gmelch et al., 2017). There

is also a lack of empirical research in this area, with many current articles relying on anecdotal evidence about the effects of specific training (Weaver et al., 2019). Institutions strive to increase the support they provide their chairs; however, even at an institution with a well-established orientation program and supplemental workshops, new chairs felt they needed more to help them adapt to the complexities (DeZure et al., 2014). Even when more learning opportunities are available for new chairs, there is often a disconnect in the messaging chairs receive about the prioritization of their time. Reward systems for academic leaders still primarily focus on research production (Hancock, 2007), which aligns with Gmelch & Miskin's (2004) comparison of the role to the god Janus who must deal with a constant duality instead of focusing on learning the new role.

One of the few recent empirical studies examining leadership training for chairs was conducted in 2019 at a small, rural research university in Pennsylvania (Weaver et al., 2019). This survey examined past and present chairs spanning a 40-year period. Despite the wide range of time department chairs served, the findings aligned with earlier research showing a lack of opportunities for leadership development. Chairs rarely attended training, and even if it was available, not all chairs participated. One of the most interesting findings from this study was that as the size of the department increased, chairs were less likely to attend training.

Common Responsibilities and Stressors of the Chair Role

In 1991, the University Council for Educational Administration (UCEA) Center for the Study of Academic Leadership conducted a 45-question survey of chairs across various institutional types in the United States and repeated a similar survey in 2016 (Gmelch et al., 2017). The survey inquired about common issues they encountered, major job stressors, and the types of training they desired. Other researchers discuss the common tasks reported by chairs,

and all are remarkably similar to the lists here, with only minor changes or additions (Berdrow, 2010; Weaver et al., 2019). According to the 2016 UCEA survey (Gmelch et al., 2017), 305 department chairs responded (a 31% response rate) and identified the following top ten issues:

1. Representing Department to Administration
2. Maintain Conducive Work Environment
3. Develop Long-Range Goals
4. Recruit & Select Faculty
5. Enhance Quality of Teaching
6. Manage Department Resources
7. Solicit Ideas to Improve Department
8. Evaluate Faculty Performance
9. Inform Faculty of Institutional Concerns
10. Teach and Advise Students

This list illustrates the range of responsibilities that a chair must manage, in addition to maintaining their own research portfolio, advising students, and teaching. It is worth noting that these responsibilities are largely consistent with the list from the 1991 survey (Gmelch et al., 2017).

In addition to the top responsibilities, the UCEA survey also captured the top ten stressors of chairs:

1. Balancing administrative and scholarly demands
2. Maintaining scholarly demands
3. Balancing work-life demands
4. Keeping current

5. Keeping up with email
6. Heavy workload
7. Attending meetings
8. Evaluating Faculty
9. Excessive self-expectations
10. Job interfering with personal time

The list of stressors highlights the vulnerabilities of chairs, particularly in managing their faculty work (specifically research) and finding ways to balance their job with their personal life. While the list of responsibilities remained largely unchanged during the 15 years between surveys, the stressors experienced a shift in both the type of stressor and its level of impact on the chairs (Gmelch et al., 2017). Several institutions have created training to help chairs learn various aspects of these responsibilities. However, many of these tasks require a deeper or more nuanced understanding than what can be captured in a single workshop.

Within this study, female chairs reported a higher stress level than their male counterparts in most areas; however, time was identified as their most significant stressor. Finding the time to stay current with their scholarship, combined with keeping up to date with email, created a frantic pace that did not allow for deep thought and reflection (Gmelch et al., 2018). Combine this with the added pressures that women have historically faced concerning caring for their families and additional "academic housework" (Macfarlane & Burg, 2019, p. 264), and it creates an imbalance between work and life that women chairs struggle to navigate (Gmelch et al., 2018).

First-Year Department Chairs

While research exists that focuses on the problems chairs face throughout their tenure in the role, very few studies emphasize the experience of chairs within the first year of their appointment. The UCEA survey inquired about the length of time it took chairs to feel competent in their roles. Forty-one percent reported feeling competent nine months in, 40% felt competent by the end of year one or two, and 19% took longer or never felt competent (Gmelch et al., 2017). Despite the lack of formal training, these numbers are substantial; however, many chairs often achieve a sense of competence just before their appointment ends. When asked what would help increase their competence, chairs responded with "requests for training in budget and finance, conflict resolution, time management, and institutional procedures" (Gmelch et al., 2017, p. 2).

Non-Academic Leadership Transitions

Leadership development is a multi-billion-dollar investment for institutions and businesses of all shapes and sizes (O'Leonard & Krider, 2014). Despite the considerable number of businesses and individuals designing programs and resources, in 2019, Deloitte conducted a Global Human Capital Trends survey of human resources and business leaders, and only 41% felt their organizations were ready to meet the current and emerging leadership needs (Volini et al., 2019). As with academia, many individuals are promoted into leadership positions based on successful performance within the context of their specific area. According to a Center for Creative Leadership survey, only 60% of new leaders reported receiving leadership training (Gentry et al., 2014). What is often overlooked in translation is the notion that leadership is a distinct skill set that requires development (Baheti et al., 2018). Without a deeper understanding of what is required of leaders, it is no wonder that nearly 40% of newly appointed leaders fail (Watkins,

2013). This suggests that the crisis in higher education leadership may not be as distinct as it sometimes appears.

Similar to new chairs, first-time managers are faced with numerous issues: "(a) misconceptions about the new position, (b) unrealistic performance expectations, (c) poor support, (d) changes in relationships with coworkers, and (e) more learning than anticipated" (Plakhotnik et al., 2011, p. 28). It is also important to note that when dealing with issues related to transitions, many supervisors in a corporate environment often determine the fate of the new leader within the first three months (Watkins, 2013). This differs from academic culture, which typically appoints individuals for a specific time frame (Weaver et al., 2019).

In 2013, the book *The First 90 Days* was published and is cited in numerous publications as a go-to guidebook for onboarding new leaders (Watkins, 2013). Watkins (2013) acknowledged that much has been written about being an effective leader, but there is a lack of research on navigating career transitions. To facilitate leadership transitions, he developed templates to help institutions create a welcoming and supportive environment, along with learning plans that the new leader can initiate. Watkins utilized his research base to empower leaders to ask questions and, during the first few months in the role, break away from common transition traps, instead creating momentum for their new leadership role (Watkins, 2013).

Defining Leadership Development

Leadership is a concept with many definitions and theories, and the methods for developing leaders differ significantly (Kjellström et al., 2020; Ruben et al., 2017). There is also a distinct difference between what works in the corporate world and what is most effective in higher education institutions (Gmelch & Buller, 2015). Specific titles have particular meanings, and the terms leader and administrator are not always used interchangeably, as the latter often

refers to more managerial work (Ruben et al., 2017). It is essential to pay attention to this distinction, as some leadership development may focus solely on practical management skills, rather than the concepts relevant to those in higher-level leadership positions.

There is also a need to distinguish between the development of skills and abilities in individual leaders versus the overall concept of leadership development, which focuses on developing leadership capacity within the organization (Day et al., 2014). Montgomery (2020) stated that "truly effective leadership development and enactment needs to promote individuals working at the interface of their personal goals and skills and the needs of the unit or institution" (p. 138). There is also a need for organizations to sequence leadership development activities at the appropriate times (Ford, 2021). Ford (2021) suggested that new leaders have a more challenging time seeing themselves as leaders and require time to change their mindsets, which then enables them to focus on "helping organizations be more efficient and effective as well as roles and responsibilities of leadership to facilitate organizational change and adaptability" (p. 267).

Leadership Development Programs. Expertise in a discipline or mastery of a skill requires time and practice; yet, new leaders are often expected to master all aspects of their new job within a short period (Gmelch & Buller, 2015). When developing leaders, it is essential to acknowledge that a single workshop or event will not create the leadership capacity necessary to lead an institution (Gmelch & Mishkin, 2004). Holt, Hall, and Gilley (2018) described leadership development "as a journey that ties experiences and theory to application in the future" (p. 217). Attention should be given to developing individualized approaches that adapt to leaders where they are instead of trying to create a one-size-fits-all approach (Rehbock, 2020). In some cases, a

leadership development program that is poorly executed or fails to align with the participants' expectations can do more harm than good (Kjellström et al., 2020).

One of the common themes in the leadership development literature is the distinction that the leader or manager is treated as someone who needs others to develop them by offering workshops and opportunities for growth. While providing such occasions for leadership development is important, the leader still needs to play an active role in the development process. A variety of scholars who study leadership note that those in leadership roles need to be continuous learners who strive to continually develop and reflect on their actions (Kouzes & Posner, 2002; Ruben et al., 2017). Kouzes and Posner (2002) best summarized this idea when they stated, “In the end, we realize that leadership development is ultimately self-development. Meeting the leadership challenge is a personal—and a daily—challenge for all of us” (p. xxviii).

Developing Women Leaders. Skill development in areas such as budgeting, human resource management, conflict resolution, and strategic planning is essential for anyone assuming a leadership role. Gender differences emerge in how issues in these various areas present themselves differently to leaders who identify as women (Eagly & Johnson, 1990). Creating spaces for women leaders is not meant to be exclusionary; however, it is needed to examine and discuss the reality of being a woman in a space that, in many ways, is still built for men (Kruse, 2022; Macfarlane & Burg, 2019). Misra et al. (2012) discuss how universities are ”gendered organizations” that reinforce the idea that “men’s lives are normative” (p. 302). Women who need to extend themselves as caregivers beyond their academic work do not personify “real workers” (Acker, 2012).

Just as women faculty “crave alternative methods and ways of being in academia” (Gonzalez & Terosky, 2020, p. 274), the development of women leaders takes on different forms

from the methods their male colleagues found successful. Some more extensive programs are built on feminist approaches to leadership; however, these often require considerable time commitments and are costly to participate in. Other localized forms of leadership development can be as simple as creating mentoring opportunities for women as they prepare for and enter leadership roles (Ely et al., 2011). Discussion groups for women leaders can also provide peer mentoring and foster a sense of community in what can sometimes be a very isolating work environment (Kruse, 2022).

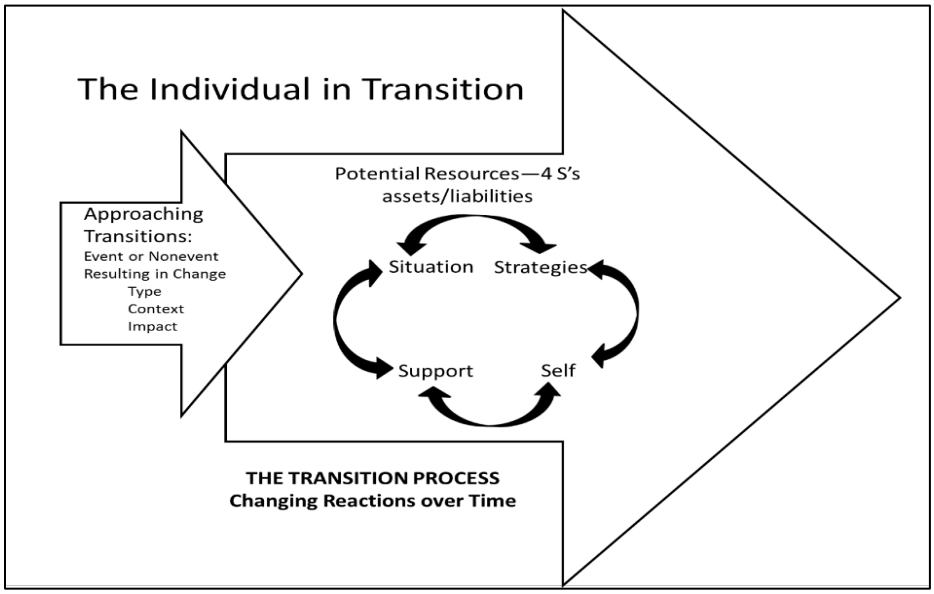
Conceptual Framework

To guide this study, I begin with Schlossberg's (1995) Transition Theory, which focuses on the variables and support that can influence an individual during their transition period as department chair. Specific focus will be given to the pieces that organizations can affect (e.g., setting up training and opportunities for support) (Schlossberg et al., 1995). I then bring in Gmelch and Buller's (2015) conceptual framework for developing academic leadership capacity. Within this model, three specific domains are presented as essential to developing effective academic leaders: Conceptual Understanding, Skill Development, and Reflective Practice. I will provide details on both models and then discuss my reasoning for combining them into a single framework that provides a more holistic model to guide this project.

Schlossberg's Transition Theory

In 1981, Nancy Schlossberg developed a model for "analyzing human adaptation to transition" (Schlossberg, 1981, p. 5). The impetus for the model was not to focus on the actual transition but instead to focus on the numerous variables that can affect the individual during the transition and influence the eventual outcome (Schlossberg, 1981).

Figure 1: The individual in transition revised transition theory model



Note. Reprinted from: Schlossberg, N.K., Waters, E.B., & Goodman, J. (1995). Counseling adults in transition: Linking practice with theory. (2nd ed.). New York, NY: Springer Publishing Company.

This theory was slightly revised in 1995 and consists of three distinct pieces that will be used for this study:

- Approaching Transitions: Transition Identification and Transition Process
- Taking Stock of Coping Resources: The 4 S System
- Taking Charge: Strengthening Resources (Schlossberg et al., 1995, p. 26).

Approaching transitions: Transition identification and transition process. To begin moving through the model, one must first identify the type, context, and impact of the transition. According to Schlossberg's model, there are three distinct types of transitions: anticipated, unanticipated, and non-event (Schlossberg, 1981). Anticipated transitions are major events that are predictable based on human life cycles and cause significant changes to a person's world (Schlossberg et al., 1995). Someone who knows their chair is retiring and wants to step into leadership, could view their transition into the role from this lens. Unanticipated transitions are

unpredictable and often viewed as a crisis (Schlossberg et al., 1995). A sudden departure of a chair with no clear candidates ready to step in could lead to the surprise appointment of an individual who may not have thought about (or wanted) a leadership position. Non-event transitions are events that one has planned for, yet they never occur. This last transition could occur for someone who wants a leadership position but is not selected. For purposes of this study, the focus only included those individuals assuming the role from either an anticipated or unanticipated transition.

The context of the transition provides a framework for understanding reactions to different transitions (Schlossberg et al., 1995). If an event is seen as positive versus something viewed as negative, it can help determine the resources needed to move through the transition process. How the transition begins, if it was the choice of the individual versus something done to them, is another piece of context important to the model (Schlossberg et al., 1995). Having sufficient knowledge about the context is vital to shaping what assets can be used to keep the individual moving through the transition and confront any liabilities.

The third area to consider is impact. When thinking about the impact of the transition, it is important to examine the overall effects a transition has on the individual (Anderson et al., 2012). The impact is more significant than the type or context because "assessment of transition's impact on relationships, routines, assumptions, and roles is probably the most important consideration in understanding an individual's reactions" (Anderson et al., 2012, p. 47). When a transition impacts multiple aspects of an individual's daily life, it can change a person's assumptions about themselves and who they are in the world.

Taking stock of coping resources: The "4 S system". Schlossberg et al. (1995) created the "The 4 S System"—Situation, Self, Support, and Strategy—as an interrelated set of

resources, or assets and liabilities, that an individual might draw on as they move through a transition. No matter the transition type, examining these four standard sets of variables helps determine an individual's ability to cope. Each person has his or her unique compilation of the "4 S's" which "employs a ratio of assets to liabilities and allows for changes in the ratio as an individual's situation changes" (p. 49). It is important to note that the ratio continuously changes depending on life circumstances. Even though a person successfully moves through a transition once, it does not mean that it will happen the same way again (Schlossberg et al., 1995).

Situation. The Situation variable refers to where a person is currently at when the transition begins and what their feelings are about the transition (Schlossberg et al., 1995). Depending on the timing of the transition, one could have an entirely dissimilar experience if it was occurring at a perceived bad time. This also relates to having a sense of control over what is happening. If the transition is internally controlled, one might feel they have more control than if it is forced upon them by external circumstances (Schlossberg et al., 1995). Additional factors that play a role in defining a Situation are the projected length of time for the transition, whether there has been an experience with a similar event, and if the transition will stimulate additional stress and transitions (Schlossberg et al., 1995).

Self. The personal and demographic characteristics, as well as the psychological resources that a person brings to the transition, are what combine to form the variable of Self (Schlossberg et al., 1995). While optimism, resilience, and the ability to deal with ambiguity are all factors that contribute to the quality and duration of a transition (Schlossberg, 2011), socialization to different transitions is also important to consider. The normalization of some transitions depends on one's socioeconomic status, gender, or racial or ethnic background (Schlossberg et al., 1995). The concept of self-efficacy and the notion of perceived control are

also included within this particular aspect (Schlossberg et al., 1995). If a person does not feel they have any influence over a Situation—true or not—the lack of positive agency can affect the transition. For this study, I will focus on the concept of Self with a specific focus on gender, but also in terms of factors that relate to identity, including but not limited to race/ethnicity, age, and ability. As individuals also have additional identities that intersect with gender, it is essential to consider how intersectionality plays a role in the transition process (Begeny et al., 2021). Intersectionality is the theory that individuals, particularly women of color, can experience multiple types of discrimination based on both gender and race (Crenshaw, 1991). "At its heart, intersectionality theory calls for an examination of the interactions of overlapping sources of identity-based stigma and an examination of how social structures and systems of power shape individuals' experiences" (Begeny et al., 2021, p.11).

The role of Self also pertains to the question of "Who am I"? or "Who will I become?" (Goodman et al., 2006, p. 98). Examining the impact on career transitions for department chairs, for many, their professional identity has always been — and will likely continue to be — that of a faculty member. For others, how they take ownership of a role can signal the amount of control they feel or may pertain to other feelings associated with their own career goals (Goodman et al., 2006).

Support. Resources needed to support someone through a transition come in a variety of shapes and sizes. Schlossberg et al. (1995) classified Supports according to four sources: "intimate relationships, family units, networks of friends, and the institutions and/or communities of which the people are a part" (p. 67). Each individual benefits from having Support at all levels, which promotes a positive sense of well-being (Schlossberg, 2011). Support systems significantly reduce stress for individuals in transition and offer additional "functions of affect,

affirmation, aid and honest feedback" (Schlossberg et al., 1995, p. 68). Historically, women have been more willing to reach out for help and Support, while men have been socialized to be independent and not show weakness (Goodman et al., 2006). Some of these behaviors can also relate to the age of individuals; however, the type of job individuals are moving into can also impact the types of Support available and needed. Department chairs often mention that the role can be lonely, especially for a faculty member who moves into overseeing the department where they worked for numerous years and experiences a change in relationships with their colleagues. Feeling like they are the only ones dealing with the issues they are facing, they need to develop new networks or systems of Support to navigate the complexities of being a chair (Hecht, 1999).

Strategy. Pearlin and Schooler (1978) defined coping Strategies as "concrete efforts to deal with the life strains they encounter in their different roles" (p.5). Within their definition, they distinguished three types of Strategies: change the current Situation, reframe the Situation, and help manage stress. The Strategies one chooses to cope with are often more important than the actual event. Individuals who cope with transition the best are flexible in their approach and utilize multiple Strategies to broaden their base of Support to reduce their stressors (Schlossberg, 2011). For chairs, this could be embodied by developing a skill they need to become better at managing budgets or engaging in difficult conversations. A Strategy could also be to build better systems of Support within the institution that can help manage the complexities of the role and its impact on individuals.

While all of the 4 S's work in collaboration, Strategy is the most dependent on what is happening with the other three (Schlossberg, 1994). Someone with an intense sense of self-efficacy may use a Strategy focused on changing the Situation. This could be taking a class that provides them with a new skill set or learning more about themself as a leader. An individual

who is part of an unplanned transition with meager support systems may have a harder time determining which Strategies to use. In either Situation, the asset-to-liability ratio will play a role in the Strategies an individual employs in the transition process (Goodman et al., 2006).

The role of gender in transitions. Much has changed in how gender is defined since this model was developed; however, the historical and societal perspectives of gender defined as male and female provide the framework for understanding the role gender plays in this particular transition model. Gender-related variables are present in all transitions and are particularly evident when examining workplace transitions and the external and internal barriers that women face (Goodman et al., 2006). While women have made great strides in working towards equal pay and opportunity, inequalities in terms of pay are still very real, especially regarding the intersectionality of women of color (Begeny et al., 2021). The same is true for the advancement of women into leadership positions. The glass ceiling has been shattered in some areas, but there are still many women working to move up the career ladder and into spaces where women still have little to no representation (Goodman et al., 2006). The behaviors and expectations society once placed on women to be "passive, dependent, and nurturing" (p. 172) are no longer as prevalent, but they still influence the systems in which we live and work.

As a woman, the 4 S's may present in various ways. Women may not have control over the Situation as they could be one of only a few females in the role. Struggling with their own self-efficacy can lead them to question whether they are in the right space, and having little to no system of Support to lean on can result in a lack of feeling that they have Strategies to cope with what is happening. These factors can indeed present challenges for anyone in a transition; however, there are additional barriers built into processes and systems that affect women in different ways (Begeny et al., 2021; Kruse, 2022).

Taking Charge: Strengthening Resources.

Transitions can sometimes be out of our control, yet the way an individual manages the resources they have available to them (specifically the 4 S's) can be controlled. This can involve utilizing existing resources in new or innovative ways to address the existing needs of individuals or identifying additional resources that can support the current Situation (Anderson et al., 2012). Others may provide resources to help with transitions; however, it is primarily the individual's responsibility to understand when to take control of implementing new or different resources. The ability to take charge of the Situation is an important aspect of the process that stems from knowing your strengths and taking time to reflect, both of which are elements demonstrated to be effective in academic leadership. The idea of taking charge of the Situation can be gendered as men are often the ones viewed as being "active, independent and aggressive" (Goodman et al., 2006, p. 127) To help focus on the role of department chairs, I will now examine how a framework for developing academic leaders can align with this transition theory.

Framework for Developing Academic Leadership Capacity

The nuances of academic leadership discussed above are critical to consider when discussing the development of academic leaders. Acknowledging that many leadership development theories and frameworks from other industries share similar approaches or components, using a model that incorporates the higher education context is essential to understanding the experiences of new chairs better. Gmelch and Buller (2015) presented a model that draws on research regarding three domains critical for academic leaders to possess in order to perform their jobs effectively: Conceptual Understanding, Skill Development, and Reflective Practice.

Conceptual Understanding. As a faculty member becomes a chair, there is often a misconception about the actual scope of what the role includes. Developing an understanding of the various tasks and responsibilities, as well as the organizational context and expectations, provides a baseline for identifying the necessary skills and behaviors (Gmelch & Buller, 2015). This foundation also provides chairs with a lens through which they can examine their views of academic leadership and other departments within the institution (Gmelch & Buller, 2015).

Skill Development. The second piece of the model involves developing the necessary skills to operate effectively on the job. Skills in this category range from managerial (e.g., time management, budgeting, or conflict management) to more leadership-focused (e.g., building community, leading change, or strategic visioning). Some of these skills can be developed in workshops over a brief period, while others develop through on-the-job experience and experimentation (Gmelch & Buller, 2015). Often, skills are developed with misconceptions drawn from corporate leadership ideals, which may not always resonate in an academic institution. This distinction is an important aspect when developing academic leaders and examining various approaches, such as internal development programs, institutional and peer mentors, and connections to professional associations that can help tailor skills in specific disciplines (Gmelch & Buller, 2015).

Reflective Practice. Leadership development cannot happen without professionals engaging in "a cycle of doing, learning from doing and then doing better (which) continually grows over time" (Gmelch & Buller, 2015, p. 86). Understanding how and why leaders approach situations in certain ways helps leaders identify their unconscious biases and develop their self-awareness. Organizations can provide some direction for developing Reflective Practice;

however, encouraging chairs to build networks with others in these sessions provides ongoing support (Stawnychko, 2021).

Figure 2: Development of academic leaders incorporating all three spheres of advancement

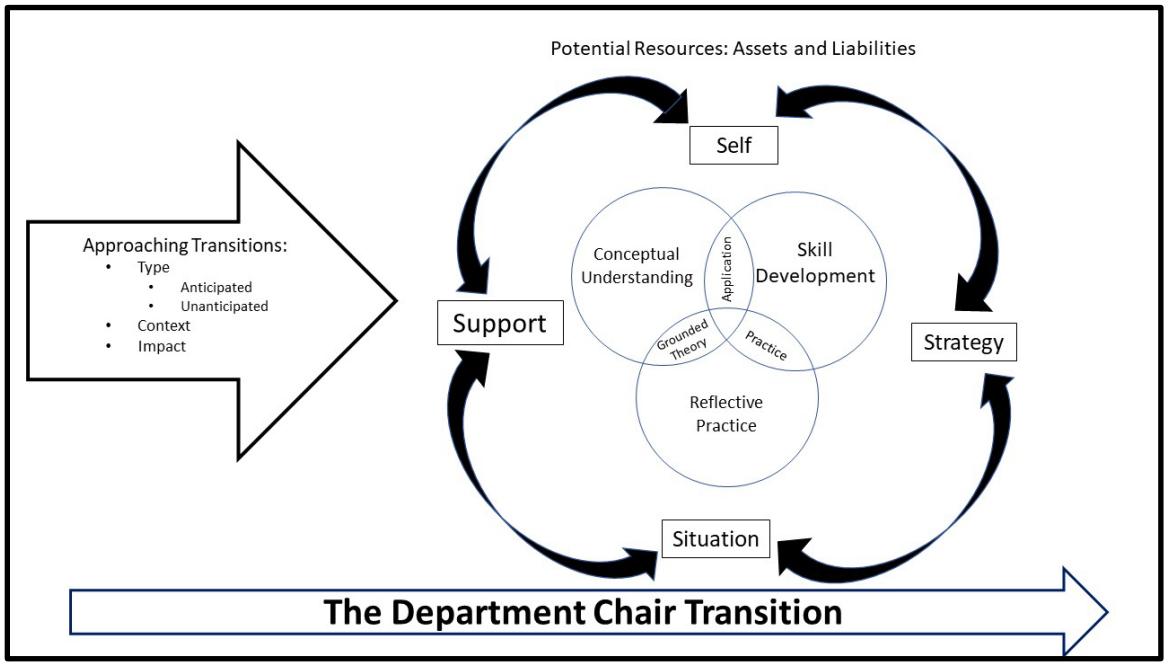
Note. Reprinted from: Gmelch, W. H. (2016). Why chairs serve, what they do, and how they lead. *The Department Chair*, *26*(3), 8–9.

Gmelch and Buller (2015) also discussed how the three domains of Conceptual Understanding, Skill Development, and Reflective Practice can overlap to create space for various types of connections for leaders. When the domains overlap in the framework, the intersections reveal areas where application, grounded theory, and practice can naturally converge, enabling leaders to develop and grow. The Application comes from combining skills and concepts to apply to current issues. To build out Practice, reflection on which skills are needed to enhance daily operations can promote efficiency. Lastly, when Reflective Practice is combined with Conceptual Understanding, Grounded Theory provides a way for academic leaders to bring the concepts together with the individual's direct experience.

Combining the Models

Working with these two models, I made slight alterations to combine them into a singular framework that guides my study (See Figure 3 The transition process still begins with acknowledging the type of transition; however, for this study, I only focused on those who assumed the role of department chair (which could be either anticipated or unanticipated). I eliminated the non-event transition type, as this would apply to someone who was not selected or did not accept the new role. The Context and Impact remain represented in the model to gauge an individual's perception of the transition and how it affects them. These are all represented in the model in the Approaching Transitions arrow that shows the forward motion moving into the transition process.

Figure 3: Model situating Gmelch and Buller's (2015) framework for developing academic leaders within Schlossberg's transition theory (Schlossberg et al., 1995)



The model's most notable change was how the 4 S's are represented. I retained the initial arrow for approaching transitions to indicate forward movement but removed the larger arrow outlining the resources. The arrow at the bottom still signals the forward motion of a transition;

however, removing it from the resources demonstrates that the transition may not follow one linear path. Instead, an individual stays situated in the resources for some time. The 4 S's—Self, Situation, Support, and Strategy— now surround the Gmelch and Buller (2015) model for developing academic leaders. Embedding the Academic Leadership model within the resources shows how the three domains of developing effective academic leaders are both influenced by the 4 S's and play a vital role in an academic leader's transition. Depending on the individual., Self, Support, Situation, and Strategy can exist in various ways and have vastly different effects on a transition. The progression of individuals through the transition to becoming a department chair is related to their ability to take charge of the aspects of Self, Support, Strategy, and Situation.

Conclusion

Utilizing Schlossberg's Transition Theory combined with Gmelch & Buller's Framework for Developing Academic Leaders provides a basis for building a qualitative study to examine the common elements in a transition while focusing on aspects key to the development of academic leaders. Bringing a more holistic theory, such as Schlossberg's Transition Theory, provides a different context for understanding what happened during the first year, which may or may not have allowed them to fully invest in their development as a new academic department chair.

It can be argued that complexities in leadership positions are common in any field or organization. This proposed study does not negate the fact that someone transitioning into a department chair role may experience many of the same difficulties as someone moving into a leadership role in the corporate sector. However, the literature on academic leadership offers sufficient nuance to demonstrate that differences exist, particularly in the context of shared

governance, and should be considered when examining leaders' experiences in higher education. It is also not enough to consider all academic leadership transitions as similar in scope. Unlike someone who transitions into the role of dean or president, the department chair is often stepping into leadership for the first time with little to no training. Studies consistently show that this role is crucial to the operation of higher education institutions. Some support has increased over the years, but many chairs still do not receive any training, or if they do, it is often limited to developing specific skills. As Gmelch and Buller (2015) demonstrated, Skill Development is significant, but it is only one domain that effective academic leaders must develop. This study will go beyond the surveys about job responsibilities and lack of training and bring attention to the lived experiences of new women department chairs by examining their transition process as it relates to their development within and across the three domains Gmelch and Buller (2015) determined as critical: Conceptual Understanding, Skill Development, and Reflective Practice.

This chapter examined the literature from a historical and current perspective, providing a foundation for understanding this study. In the next chapter, I discuss the methodological choices and my positionally as a researcher. Particulars about the study will also be detailed.

CHAPTER 3: METHODOLOGY

This chapter explores my methodological choices and outlines the methods used in the study. I first examine my positionality as a researcher and the epistemological perspective that guides the research. Next, I discuss my decision to employ a qualitative approach and use interviews as my primary method of data collection. This is followed by a detailed description of the process used to conduct the study, including participant selection, data collection, and analysis. Assumptions, delimitations, and limitations round out the chapter.

This study used a qualitative methodology to explore the transition experiences of first-year women department chairs. While the literature on issues facing department chairs has expanded over the past few decades, most existing research is either quantitative or anecdotal in nature and does not provide an in-depth analysis of the lived experiences of department chairs. Using a qualitative approach allows me, as a researcher, the opportunity to peer through "a unique window into the thoughts, experiences, and motivations of others" (Remler & Van Ryzin, 2015, p. 61). For my study, I seek to understand the following:

- Research Question: What are the lived experiences of new women department chairs, in terms of challenges and successes, as they transition into their new professional role over the course of their first year?
    - Sub-question 1: During the period of their first year as a department chair, in what ways do the challenges and successes they experience relate to each of three important domains of effective academic leadership development (i.e., Conceptual Understanding, Skill Development and Reflective Practice)?
    - Sub-question 2: In what ways and to what extent do key factors associated with transition theory relate to the transition process new women chairs experience?

- Sub-question 3: Are there other factors that relate to the transition experience of women department chairs throughout their first year?

Positionality

I am not a department chair, nor have I ever served in that role. While I am not directly a member of the group I study, my job is directly tied to developing academic leaders at a large research university. As someone who serves in an administrative staff role, I must acknowledge that my insights on this topic come from where I sit in the institution. As a practitioner, it can sometimes be easy to make decisions about development opportunities based on research, but these decisions may be prescriptive in nature. The constructivist paradigm allows space where "theory and practice inform one another in a mutually shaping manner" (Broido & Manning, 2002, p. 436). In my role as a practitioner and researcher, it is crucial that I remain aligned with this paradigm, which aims to comprehend the multitude of complex truths that exist (Broido & Manning, 2002).

It is also vital that I come to understand how my epistemological approach influences how I conducted my interviews and interacted with the data. Saldaña (2011) describes how "knowledge is constructed within the individual, rather than something outside of oneself waiting to be discovered" (p. 23). As the researcher, I am the "primary instrument" in the research, and my own experiences, demographic factors, values, etc., affect how I interpret and analyze the data received from participants (Saldaña, 2011, p.22). Trust needs to be established between my participants and me, and that relationship should also be "subjective, interactive, and interdependent" (Broido & Manning, 2002, p. 436).

Research Methods

Two semi-structured interviews were conducted with participants to capture their experiences at various points in the first-year transition process. The first 60-minute interview took place after their first semester concluded, approximately in February or March. The second interview was scheduled for 90 minutes and took place at the end of the first year, in May or early June. This approach allowed participants more time to engage in reflection and storytelling, sharing their lived experiences (Saldaña, 2011). Interviews, specifically those that are semi-structured, provide an "opportunity to learn about what you cannot see and to explore alternative explanations of what you do see" (Glesne, 2011, p. 104). As the researcher, I had some control over following up on specific areas and probing when needed (Creswell, 2015).

Site and Participant Selection

Eight participants were selected from among the thirteen public universities comprising a large Midwestern athletic and academic conference. Since the Carnegie Commission classifies all of these institutions as R1 Doctoral Universities, the department chair's core responsibilities were similar in scope. The one private institution in this group was excluded to avoid it becoming a variable in the experience. My initial design for participants was to have only chairs beginning their role in the Fall of 2022 who identify as women and have never served as department chairs in either an interim or full-time capacity. The actual population for this group was smaller than anticipated, so the participant pool was expanded to include two additional chairs, beginning in January 2023, and one chair who had previously served in the role but transitioned to a new role in a department outside her discipline.

To help recruit participants, I collaborated with the network of faculty affairs offices within the conference to identify and connect with their newly appointed department chairs. I

purposefully sampled from this group of universities to develop a diverse sample in terms of race, ethnicity, and gender of the individuals, as well as diversity within the discipline and the size of their departments. Regarding discipline, I specifically sought to select chairs that represented the broad areas of the social sciences, the arts and humanities, the natural sciences, and the professional schools (e.g., business and education). These four areas provided a high-level approach to organizing the disciplines (Becher, 1994). (Department chairs from medical departments were not included in this study due to additional complexities they face.) Sampling from this range of institutions also helped with issues of anonymity that could come from working with a smaller group of institutions. Due to the smaller pool of potential participants, the sample was not as diverse as I hoped, with only one woman of color able to participate. The disciplines were evenly represented, with two chairs representing the social sciences, three in the arts and humanities, two from the natural sciences, and one from a professional school (e.g., business and education).

Data Collection

Participants were not all from the same institution or even the same state, so all interviews took place using video conferencing software. At the beginning of each interview, I requested permission to record the interview for transcription purposes. This allowed me to focus my attention on the discussion and ask relevant follow-up questions as they arose. The video conferencing software provided a basic transcription; however, after each interview, I went back through to listen and correct the transcript before sending it to the recipients to allow them to member-check. At the beginning of the first interview, the participants were asked to select their own pseudonym to be used throughout the study and serve as a way for them not to feel completely isolated from the experiences they shared. Reaching out after each interview also

continued the relationship with my participants, building their trust as partners in this research study. This was especially critical since I conducted their second interview in the following months.

The series of two interviews was semi-structured to ensure that key points were explored; however, the probing questions varied depending on what participants brought up in their discussions. Before the first interview, I reached out to participants to complete their informed consent form and also asked them to fill out a set of initial questions that outlined their demographics. This allowed us to focus more on open-ended questions when we began the interviews.

For the first interview (see Appendix C), I began with more general open-ended questions to allow participants to reflect on their transition experiences up to that point. Allowing them to tell their story enabled me to gather valuable information to follow up on in the second interview and allowed them to share what was most relevant to them. To gather background information, the situation surrounding how they became chair was explored, along with the types of opportunities and resources they found helpful during the first part of their transition. The second interview (see Appendix D) also began with an open-ended question to gauge how things were going but then expanded to focus on systems of Support, Skill Development, and Reflection on the overall year. I reviewed the information they shared during the first interview and tailored follow-up questions to probe specific areas of interest. Since this interview fell at the end of the academic year, there were also questions about whether they felt their transition was complete.

To determine the optimal flow for the interview questions, two pilot interviews were conducted to ensure the collection of high-quality data. In addition to conducting two interviews with each participant, I incorporated a section at the end of the pilot interview process to assess

whether the questions were too intrusive or if any wording did not resonate with them. These interviews were conducted with two current chairs with varying years of service in the role. The feedback they provided was incorporated into the final interview questions, uncovering a few gaps that I needed to address before proceeding with the actual interviews.

Data Analysis

Data analysis began during the data collection phase as I employed memo writing after each interview. This helped me to capture thoughts on emerging themes, connections, and questions as they pertained to what I just heard in the interview (Glesne, 2011; Saldaña, 2011). Shortly after each interview, I worked from the initial raw transcription to ensure the interview was accurately transcribed before sending it to the participant for their review and feedback. This member-checking process allowed participants to review their answers and provide additional feedback if they believed the transcripts were not "complete and realistic" portrayals of their shared experiences (Creswell, 2015, p. 259). The transcribed interviews were then uploaded into Dedoose to facilitate coding and data tracking. My data analysis was iterative in nature, as I reviewed the interviews multiple times before beginning to code using thematic analysis.

Creswell (2017) described thematic analysis as "distilling how things work and naming the essential features in themes in the cultural setting" (p. 477). This analysis moves beyond describing what is to make interpretations about the people and their experiences (Creswell, 2015). The data is then coded and compared to examine the common themes and patterns (Glesne, 2011). The coding process was iterative as I moved back and forth between coding and comparing. This allowed for the development of a group of themes that did not overlap and for which there was sufficient evidence from the data to support each one (Creswell, 2017). A deductive coding approach was initially employed as I sought elements associated with the

overarching categories of the 4 S's: Self, Situation, Strategy, and Support, along with the three domains of effective academic leadership: Skill Development, Conceptual Understanding, and Reflective Practice. Using these as a starting point helped to illustrate where the two models converged and where sub-themes emerged. I then went back to code those sub-themes while also paying attention to items that did not fit neatly into one area. To prevent data that fell outside the sub-themes from being lost, I designated an "other" code and closely examined it to see if any additional themes emerged.

Glesne (2011) also discussed the need to examine the "underlying complexities" that can arise from tensions in the data (p. 188). To capture ideas that needed further exploration or where contradictions in the data emerged, I continued to engage in memo writing as I progressed through the coding process. This became another artifact of the study, helping me to identify my interpretations of the data (Creswell, 2015).

Assumptions, Limitations, and Delimitations

This study examined the experiences of new department chairs as they navigated their transition during their first year. My assumption framing this study was that the one-year timeframe would allow the chair to experience all aspects of an academic cycle and, therefore, complete their initial transition phase. While this limitation may not capture everyone's actual transition into the role, I needed to create the boundary to focus on as a manageable unit of analysis (Glesne, 2011). Other delimitations included my site selection and participant recruitment. Within the particular conference I chose for selecting participants, all universities are designated as R1 doctoral institutions; however, the organizational leadership and cultures provided vastly different experiences. I also needed to rely on the faculty affairs leadership

network at the institutions to provide me with potential participants. Although I endeavored to have a diverse sample, I was limited by the demographics of the new cohort of incoming chairs.

Using Schlossberg's Transition Theory and Gmelch and Miskin's Framework for Developing Academic Leaders provided me with a map to use as I navigated the findings. However, it is necessary to note that because of the guidance these provided, some data may have become privileged by virtue of being aligned with the theory or framework and, thus, easier to navigate. It is even possible that I may have missed something because I was focused on what I initially laid out in my conceptual framework.

Lastly, conducting a study with such a small sample allowed me to go in-depth with the chairs who chose to participate; on the other hand, I only captured the experiences of a small number of chairs, who may or may not represent the larger population of chairs. The information captured is not generalizable; however, I hope this research can provide a foundation for future studies to explore transition issues of chairs at a broader level.

Conclusion

My research contributes to advancing the literature on the experiences of women department chairs, extending beyond the basics of the role. Department chairs are crucial to the higher education infrastructure, yet there is still much to understand about the role and the individuals who assume these positions. As the expectations of department chairs continue to become more complex and time-consuming, it is critical to understand more about how individuals navigate a transition that is not only shifting their workload but is creating a new identity. This study's methodological approach provided an opportunity to examine this transition experience while remaining situated within the literature on developing academic

leadership capacity. The next chapter introduces the participants and provides an overview of the research findings in relation to the conceptual frameworks that guide this study.

CHAPTER 4: OVERVIEW OF RESEARCH FINDINGS

The first year of any job is typically filled with a mix of emotions as you learn the duties and gain a better understanding of the ebb and flow of the year. Stepping into the role of department chair is no different. This study examined the experiences of eight women as they transitioned into their roles as department chairs. The women chairs in this study shared many similarities, yet each had unique stories about their transitions into what is viewed as a highly complex role. To better understand what these women experienced during the first year of their appointment, each participant was interviewed twice, resulting in a total of 16 interviews. Interviews were structured around the guiding research questions:

> Research Question: What are the lived experiences of new women department chairs, in terms of challenges and successes, as they transition into their new professional role over the course of their first year?
>
> Sub-question 1: During the period of their first year as a department chair, in what ways do the challenges and successes they experience relate to each of three important domains of effective academic leadership development (i.e., Conceptual Understanding, Skill Development, and Reflective Practice)?
>
> Sub-question 2: In what ways and to what extent do key factors associated with transition theory relate to the transition process new women chairs experience?
>
> Sub-question 3: Are there other factors that relate to the transition experience of women department chairs throughout their first year?

This chapter introduces the participants and summarizes the data from the interviews. In this introduction to the participants, I first provide details about each of the eight chairs who graciously shared their experiences. During the interviews, data were collected using three

approaches: 1) questions around the theoretical lens of Schlossberg's Transition Theory (Approaching Transitions, Self, Situation, Support, and Strategy), 2) questions examining Gmelch and Buller's Academic Leadership Development Framework (Conceptual Understanding, Skill Development, and Reflective Practice); and 3) a prompt to have participants draw a picture representing their transition. Using narrative analysis, a deductive approach was used to examine the participants' experiences. What follows is a high-level overview of the findings based on the guiding framework for this study in terms of challenges and successes in each area.

Participant Overview

An introduction to the eight participants follows, including key identity factors they chose to share, details about their appointment, and relevant situational context. Table 1 provides a summary of key attributes. The original intention was to have a sample with broad diversity, but the reality is that few women currently hold these roles. The lack of women in the chair role was significantly limiting when examining those only in their first year within a specific grouping of institutions. The low number of women in these roles necessitated a shift in the sample to include more women of similar racial backgrounds and one woman who had previously served as a chair but was called back to assume the chair role for a different discipline than her own. While the participants were not diverse in terms of race and ethnicity, the variations in their experiences collectively provided a detailed description of what it means for a woman to transition into the role of department chair.

The eight women department chairs in this study represented six different institutions of similar mission and size. To help protect anonymity, a high-level breakdown by discipline includes two chairs representing the social sciences, three in the arts and humanities, two from

the natural sciences, and one from a professional school (e.g., business and education). Six were joining the role as full professors, and two as associate professors. One of the associate professors submitted her promotion packet during her first year in the role, and the second plans to submit her packet next year. While half of the group were stepping into the role as the first woman chair in their department, one was stepping into the role as the first woman of color chair. Two chairs had departments employing 10-15 faculty, four had between 20-30 faculty, and two served approximately 50 faculty members. These numbers do not reflect staff and adjunct faculty. Finally, the percentage of each woman's appointment dedicated to the chair role is not directly correlated with the number of faculty in their department. The time range is anywhere from 30% to 80% of their workload, with two chairs not having a precise percentage clarified.

Table 1-Participant Demographic Overview

Pseudonym	Discipline Area	First Female Chair in Department?	Faculty Rank	Number of Faculty	Time Allocation	Term
Kira	Arts and Humanities	No	Associate Professor	10-20	30%	3 years
Suzanne	Arts and Humanities	No	Full Professor	20-30	50%	2 years
Pippin	Natural Sciences	Yes	Full Professor	10-20	Not provided to the chair	5 years
June	Social Sciences	No	Full Professor	Approx. 50	60% (ish) or 4 course releases plus 20% service	1-year terms renewed annually for 3 years
Susan	Social Sciences	Yes	Full Professor	Approx. 50	Maybe 60% (not clarified to chair)	5 years
Ollie	Arts and Humanities	Yes	Associate Professor	10-20	Not provided to the chair	3 years
Jane	Professional School	First WOC Chair in Department	Full Professor	20-30	50%	3 years (but 4 is hoped for)
Clara	Natural Sciences	Yes	Full Professor	20-30	70%	5 years

Participant-June

June found herself applying for the chair role in her department earlier than expected. chairs in her department serve one-year terms that "habitually renew for three years." A full professor, June planned to develop new networks and skills before applying for the position in six years. When the head of the search committee reached out, she initially said no but did add that they could come back to her if no one else was interested. Another person was interested in the position; however, there was concern that the individual needed more time to be ready to serve as chair and would defer to June if she took the job. June was a program administrator and an associate chair prior, so she had some administrative experience coming into leading a large department in an arts and humanities field. With approximately 50 faculty and the same number of academic staff, June negotiated a release from teaching to have appropriate time to manage the department. She did not have a precise percentage assigned for the administrative part of the job. However, an estimated 40% of her time was directly allocated to the chair position, in addition to the 20% service allocation already included. Instead of considering it as 60% dedicated to being chair, it is presented as a release from teaching four courses.

June identifies as a white lesbian woman, and one of the reasons she was hesitant to become chair was having two young children at home. The plan to take the role later in her career would mean that the children would be older, but after some reflection, June realized that there were opportunities to leverage resources that might not be available in six years. June's partner was also able to adjust her job to take on more of the household logistics, allowing June more time for the chair role. While not the first woman chair, June is the "youngest and most junior department chair the department has had, maybe ever, but certainly in the last 15 years".

Participant-Clara

Clara was the only chair interviewed who was an external hire. The timing made it difficult for her to start at the beginning of the academic year, so she assumed her role in January. Clara's department is in the natural sciences and has between 20-30 faculty members, many of whom are jointly appointed with other departments. She is the first woman serving as chair and has 70% of the time allocated to the role. The department has faced numerous issues over the past few years and has sought someone to rebuild its culture, restore trust, and foster a stronger sense of community. Identifying as a white woman, Clara is married, and her partner is an academic within the same department she oversees. While Clara's career has benefited from the move, her husband has not initially experienced the same positive connection to the new institution. He is committed to supporting Clara in her career; however, it was stressful for Clara that he was experiencing challenges connecting to the new community.

Coming from a less prestigious research institution, Clara had a strong presence in her professional society, which sparked her interest in continuing to develop her leadership and administrative skills. Moving to take this new chair role not only provided her with an opportunity to lead but also gave her access to a better infrastructure to support her research. Being the only chair in the study who moved between institutions, Clara experienced a range of responses from her previous institution when she announced her departure, including outright hostility from colleagues, specifically her chair. The hostility was not limited to Clara and her husband but also seeped into the students who were staying behind and needed to find other faculty to guide their studies. Clara's transition was conflicted because they thought the department they were leaving was positive overall. However, their last semester was so unpleasant that it amplified the expectations for how great the new institution would be for both

their careers. "That added to this whole stress of leaving. It added a layer of compartmentalized guilt about making this decision in the first place."

Participant-Ollie

Ollie is a white female serving as her department's first woman chair. Her department is working on achieving gender parity, but they have yet to have a woman as a full professor (Ollie is still an Associate Professor hoping to go up for promotion in the coming year), and only last year was Ollie the first woman to lead a job search. Ollie oversees an arts and humanities department of 10-20 faculty members with diverse research foci. Serving a five-year term, Ollie participated in a rigorous search process that consisted of over a dozen meetings with various stakeholders. Ollie previously applied for the position, but the person selected for the last term was more senior at the time, and it was understandable why they were chosen for the role. Serving in a small department, Ollie felt like the chair role was something she should consider, and she had some ideas for improvement and change. Moving into administration as a possible career path was not a motivating factor; in fact, it was one of the last things Ollie considered when evaluating the position.

Still teaching one course per year, Ollie received the equivalent of three course releases to take on the job but was not provided with any specific percentages for her chair duties. Even with the course releases, Ollie expressed how exhausting the role can be. Home factors also contributed to the stress of the job. Ollie and her husband had bought a house further from campus the year before, which added to their commute time, and they had also adopted a new, active puppy, contributing to a hectic home life.

Participant-Pippin

Pippin also serves as the first woman chair in her department in the natural sciences. With 10-20 faculty, it is a smaller department with a five-year term for the department chair. The previous chair decided they wanted to return to the faculty, and Pippin put her name forward to be considered for the role. Pippin brings experience as the director of graduate studies and saw the chair position as a natural career progression. No specific percentage for the chair role was provided to Pippin, and she only received a partial course release. She is still teaching, but at a reduced level compared to before she became chair.

Pippin is a white, married woman with two older children. She prioritizes her family and states that because she has made sacrifices for her family, it has affected her work and ability to become a more famous scientist. Pippin states she has no regrets and still makes time to take kids to practice and attend their events, which helps her balance out some of the stress the job creates.

Participant-Kira

Kira oversees a smaller department in the arts and humanities consisting of 10-20 faculty. While not the first female chair, she has been the only woman in the department for the last ten years. As a white female, Kira is an associate professor who just submitted her portfolio for full professor. The chair role is a three-year term, and Kira negotiated for a course release during her time in the role. Kira navigates a visual disability that adds to the complexities of administrative work. The college does not provide chairs with administrative assistance, so Kira knew the role would require extra time. Her contract states that 30% of her time should be allocated to the chair work, but Kira states it is at least 50%.

As a member of a small department, Kira felt it was her turn to take on the chair role, but she negotiated a mid-year start to allow her to complete a manuscript. Earlier in her career, Kira

served as the director of research at her previous institution and also acted as a grant reviewer for a major overseas government entity. These opportunities equipped her with a wealth of administrative experience that she brings to the chair role. At this time, she is not interested in pursuing administration beyond this appointment, as she also has a startup company that she wants to continue nurturing and growing.

Participant-Susan

Susan leads a larger department in the social sciences and is the first woman to assume this role in the department. Overseeing 50-60 faculty, Susan does not have a specific percentage of time stated in her contract dedicated to the chair role but estimates it would be approximately 60% based on her other responsibilities (she notes that percentage is not a reality). As a white female, she is not only the first woman in the role but is also the youngest person to lead the department. Susan states that this was not a role she sought and that she was "pushed" into applying for the position after the first candidate was found unacceptable. She was able to negotiate for no teaching in the first year, along with a substantial salary raise that brought her salary up to the average of what other full professors in the department make.

Susan was caught in a mid-career trap for several years as she took on "tons of service and did a million things for other people" and still tries to manage being a "people-pleaser" who takes care of everything. As a wife and a mother, Susan struggles to compartmentalize work and home, but work often creeps into other areas, bringing with it a sense of guilt that Susan strives to manage. Her chair term is five years, although she often questions if she will stay in the role for that long.

Participant-Jane

Jane is the first woman of color to chair her department and is the only woman of color participant in this study. Jane moved institutions during the height of the pandemic a few years ago and was surprised that she became chair since it typically goes to a more senior department member. There was one other person initially interested in the role, but when they learned that Jane was also interested, the other person decided not to pursue the role.

Jane's role accounts for 50% of her time, and the department comprises between 20-30 faculty and staff members, many of whom are new hires. For the first year in the role, Jane negotiated for no teaching so she could take the time needed to figure out the job. Chairs serve for three years in her department with the option for a fourth year. However, Jane already thinks she will opt for the additional year since she feels that "3 years is not enough time to accomplish any of the goals that I set out as chair. I feel like it is just too quick of a turnover in leadership, and I at least need to do four years".

As a single woman with no children, Jane has found the role to be all-encompassing. Her first year in the role found her neglecting her health and not exercising, so she is already planning to re-prioritize her well-being. Being one of only a few black administrators at a primarily white institution (PWI), Jane felt an additional layer of exhaustion and isolation. She feels that when racial situations happen, statements are made, but actions do not follow, and nothing changes. Lacking a community of other Black women faculty or administrators to rely on, Jane has been searching for these networks at conferences.

Participant-Suzanne

Suzanne identifies as a queer white woman and is the only participant who previously held a chair role. During her previous tenure as chair, she participated in two leadership

programs, which contributed to her skill development. While she previously served as chair within her home department in a humanities field, she was asked to step into the chair role in a department different from her discipline but still within the same college. At the time, she was on sabbatical. However, the dean lost confidence in the current chair and wanted someone with experience to step in and help guide a department that was struggling with its culture and climate. There was also a lack of awareness among the faculty about issues with the outgoing chair, adding a layer of complexity to her transition. Compared with the situations of the other women in the study, Suzanne had the most unanticipated transition. She is currently serving a two-year term, with 50% of her time allocated to serving as chair. Her current department is well-resourced, with a significant administrative staff and 20-30 faculty members.

Overview of Findings

The following section provides a high-level overview of the study's findings, and the next chapter will detail how the data intersects to tell the story of these women as they navigate the role of department chair. Challenges and successes will first be discussed as they relate to Gmelch and Buller's three domains of effective academic leadership development (i.e., Conceptual Understanding, Skill Development, and Reflective Practice), followed by an analysis using the 4 S's of Schlossberg's Transition Theory (Situation, Self, Support, and Strategy).

Domains of Effective Academic Leadership Development-Challenges and Successes

Gmelch and Buller developed a framework outlining how three elements contribute to the effectiveness of academic leaders: Conceptual Understanding, Skill Development, and Reflective Practice. Presented as a Venn Diagram in Chapter 2 (see Figure 2), each of the three domains has specific attributes that can impact how an academic leader approaches their work and their personal development. Participants were asked questions about their transition in terms of

challenges and surprises, as well as successes or positives, with follow-up prompts as needed.

Table 2 provides an overview of the most common themes that emerged from this framework.

Table 2: Challenges and successes data analyzed by the three elements of Gmelch and Buller's effective academic leadership development model: conceptual Understanding, skill development and reflective practice

Conceptual Understanding-Challenges	
Introduction to the Role	• Lack of formal job description or discussion about job expectations with their dean • Feeling thrown into the role with little to no training • Understanding and navigating the large range of responsibilities and competing interests
Time	• Lack of time to devote to learning the job • The cycle of the academic calendar brings with it new tasks and deadlines that take longer the first time through • Dealing with others' expectations for how quickly things need to be handled • The percentage of time allocated for the job is not realistic.
Navigating Interpersonal Issues	• Changing Relationships with colleagues • Developing new networks to support the work • Dealing with those who question your authority • Working with Administrative Staff
Delivering Bad News	• Addressing Performance and Behavior Issues • Worrying about having to disappoint someone
Hidden Work	• Being the only woman or woman of color in the room • Emotional labor can be more taxing on women • Navigating a disability as a leader
Conceptual Understanding-Successes	
Understanding Your Impact	• Understanding your role helps the chair see how they can make a positive impact
Driving Change	• Laying the groundwork for change takes time, but as the chair learns their role they see what is needed to create sustainable change
Culture of Appreciation	• Creating opportunities to recognize and celebrate colleagues
Building relationships	• Opportunity to develop new networks, both internal and external to the institution

Table 2 (cont'd)

Skill Development - Challenges	
Understanding Institutional Processes and Tasks	• Varying levels of support to learn policies and processes
Interpersonal Issues	• Understanding how your personality contributes to how you lead • Learning to trust and delegate • Managing conflict and having difficult conversations • Learning how to communicate with different groups
Time	• Learning how to manage time and balance the tasks • Email management • Working on compartmentalization
Skill Development-Successes	
Building Confidence	• Embracing the cycle of the academic year and the ability to learn new tasks
Developing Self-Capacity	• Finding value in self-development • Using disciplinary research skills to help advance the department
Reflective Practices- Challenges	
Time	• Not enough time to complete tasks and do not feel like they can take time to reflect • Dealing with feelings of guilt when not working
Wellbeing	• Feeling the job was taking over • Forcing themselves to practice self-care
Living Your Values	• Staying true to your values when you do not see the institution taking action
Reflective Practice-Successes	
Celebrating Your Successes	• Not losing sight that being the chair is a privilege and serving in the role is an accomplishment
Investing Time in Yourself	• Taking the time for reflection helps the chair personally and influences how they lead the department

Conceptual Understanding-Challenges. Within Gmelch and Buller's three domains of effective academic leadership development, Conceptual Understanding was the category that saw the highest number of challenges and successes. "Whether it is in terms of frames, roles, responsibilities, models, or tasks, chairs need to understand the dimensions of their position (Gmelch, 2002)." Gmelch (2002) shares that the two most essential pieces of the move to academic leadership are for the faculty to understand the full concept of the job and how this affects the shift from a faculty mindset to a leadership mindset and to understand the

complexities of leading in higher education and how this can vary by institution and department (Gmelch & Buller, 2015). The women chairs experienced five main themes in relation to Conceptual Understanding: their introduction to the role, time, navigating interpersonal issues, delivering bad news, and uncovering hidden work.

Introduction to the Role. The most significant challenge for all the women department chairs was around how they were introduced to the role. This was the first formal leadership role for seven of the eight chairs. Despite being new to the role, without receiving a formal job description or discussing expectations with their dean, each woman in the study felt essentially thrown into the role with little to no preparation. Various levels of support were provided at the university, college, and department levels; however, most felt they were in a very lonely space as they assumed the chair role. While some noted that it was challenging to fully comprehend the complexity of the role until they were in the position, it was still a surprise for most of the women not to receive even an outline of responsibilities. The ambiguity about responsibilities was especially true for those transitioning directly from a faculty role who were now faced with maintaining their research while navigating an extensive range of new responsibilities. As new middle managers, the women shared frustrations with learning how to translate messaging from upper administration to make it understandable and applicable to the context of their units. Balancing the need to learn institutional processes and tasks with the department's expectations for the chair created a very steep learning curve.

Time. Throughout the interviews, time was mentioned as a challenge in every area discussed, but it was most prominent when it came to chairs needing more time to dedicate to learning the job. Most participants mentioned not having enough time to complete their tasks, let alone spend time reflecting on their decisions and actions or participating in training that could

help them navigate a process. In addition to keeping up with the continuous learning cycle that comes with an academic calendar, the first time tackling a new process always seems to take longer than expected. Learning basic tasks, such as budget management or annual review, was mentioned as daunting but became even more time-consuming as layers of long-term problems began to surface, which was the case for many participants. In addition to the list of tasks and responsibilities, the influx of emails was an issue that all participants agreed was a significant drain on their time, something they had not expected. Regarding the amount of time they were supposed to dedicate to the chair role, each chair had a different percentage of time allocated for the job. However, all agreed that the percentages were unrealistic and that the time they devoted to the role was much higher.

Navigating Interpersonal Issues. Dealing with personnel issues was unsurprising for the new chairs. However, what was not expected was the level of in-depth information they learned about their colleagues. Handling these confidential situations also required a shift in relationships, most notably for the women who moved from faculty to chair in the same department and had existing friendships with many of the colleagues they were now overseeing. There was a need to develop new networks for all the women, which proved to be a challenge for everyone. Determining who to trust was challenging and required additional effort for those new to an institution.

Another challenge the chairs encountered with this theme was learning to work with administrative staff. While the person holding the chair role shifts every few years, the staff supporting the department in financial., human resources, and other administrative functions typically do not change at the same rate. In some cases, the chairs described power struggles with

certain staff members and had to find a balance in navigating their relationships with these key team members while learning from their expertise.

Multiple chairs commented on struggles with their tenured colleagues, many of whom were older and male, who seemed to follow their own rules and were not concerned with how their behaviors affected others. Comments made towards these women chairs explicitly and implicitly showcased the biases particular colleagues had about dealing with a younger woman as chair. Power struggles with this group differed from those with administrative staff but felt unresolvable due to the lack of authority they felt they had when dealing with tenured faculty.

Delivering Bad News. When managing people, there will be times when those who are underperforming or engaging in behavior that violates policy or contributes to an unwelcoming departmental climate and culture must be addressed. For many of the women, this was not an area they felt overly comfortable addressing. There are also situations where the chair must be the one to disappoint someone with news that they do not want to hear. In some cases, this involves informing someone that they will not be receiving tenure and attempting to counsel the individual about alternative career possibilities.

Hidden Work. While women are becoming more present in leadership, the fact that half of the women participating in this study were still the first women in their department to serve as chair is not insignificant. Many of the women in this study reflected on the difficulty in assessing how much of their success or failure is connected to being a woman in the role versus their personality, age, race, or the intersection of these factors. It is not easy to point to any one individual factor. However, there were similarities in the additional work that women, or those from other traditionally underrepresented groups, must navigate to get the job done.

Being the only woman chair, or one of only a few in a still male-dominated position, created an environment where some women felt they needed to prepare more thoroughly before meetings. Suzanne mentioned how she sees authority granted faster to straight, white males. Those who fall outside of those demographics must work harder to build that same trust. June shared how she presents as more of a "butch lesbian," which may help her navigate these dynamics easier than her colleagues, who present as more feminine.

There were also sentiments shared that the emotional labor of the job can be more taxing on women, especially since they are often seen as more of a caregiver than their male counterparts. In this study, individuals who identified with another underrepresented identity faced even greater challenges as they encountered additional difficulties from their colleagues and the broader institution. As the first black woman chair in her department's history, Jane found herself inundated with requests to meet with students, a phenomenon that had not occurred with the previous black male chair.

Conceptual Understanding-Successes. While challenges were often the first to come to mind when the chairs were thinking about the role, there were definite positives for the women chairs as they settled into their new jobs. Because success could be hard to envision after only being in the role for a short time, the women chairs were asked to tell a story about the most affirming or positive aspects of the job. Much of what was shared related to the domain of Conceptual Understanding, and four main themes emerged: understanding the positive impact you can have, driving change, fostering a culture of appreciation, and building new relationships.

Understanding Your Impact. Understanding the impact they can have as a chair was not taken lightly by any of the women interviewed. There was a recognition that serving as a department chair is a privilege, as it affords the opportunity to positively impact the lives of

faculty, staff, and students. As the women progressed through the academic year, they gained more confidence, which led them to explore different ways to support those in their department.

Driving Change. Throughout their first year, the chairs developed a deeper understanding of their job responsibilities, enabling them to identify areas where they could work to create change. In some situations, departmental cultural issues needed to be dealt with immediately. Over the first few months, significant changes occurred, creating a sense of optimism about moving forward to address more substantial issues. Laying the groundwork is a slow process, but seeing the department take ownership of new ideas also imparted a sense that change would not just happen but would also be sustained.

Culture of Appreciation. Creating a department culture where all individuals felt welcome and seen was important to all the women. Recognizing faculty for awards and delivering good news about promotion and tenure were all discussed as parts of the job that gave them a sense of happiness and pride for their colleagues. In addition to faculty recognition, there was a strong desire to acknowledge everyone for their different roles in the department. This effort included connecting with administrative staff and finding ways to recognize their work and show them they are appreciated.

Appreciation was also discussed as it applied to feedback the chairs received from others. Gratification came from receiving affirming comments from the dean or hearing from faculty about how they noticed the increase in collaborations and resources devoted to the unit. Additionally, a couple of the chairs even mentioned working with students to ensure the appreciation cycle reached every layer of the department. Including students in discussions about departmental culture, helping to find ways to elevate their work, acknowledging them with a

greeting, and asking about their work when walking down the hall were all mentioned as contributing elements.

Building Relationships. The shifting of relationships and isolation in the role were both presented as challenges; however, the opportunity to build new relationships and establish collaborations was viewed as a success. Forming new relationships with colleagues, both internal and external to the institution, was a way to build a support network and discuss the complexities of the chair role. The other type of relationship building was redefining relationships with faculty and establishing the groundwork for their expectations. It was necessary to redefine who they were as chairs, especially for those who became chair of the department where they previously worked.

Skill Development-Challenges. Once the chairs obtain a better understanding of the job, they can focus on developing the skills needed to help manage the role. Gmelch and Buller (2015) emphasized the importance of identifying and investing time in skills related to both management and leadership. Institutions often focus on helping chairs learn the job but fall short when it comes to helping them acquire and hone new skills (Gmelch & Buller, 2015). The chairs in this study were asked about the skills they relied on in their positions, any new skills they had developed, and the types of opportunities provided to them by their institutions. Analysis of the data revealed three key areas that most chairs identified as challenges: understanding institutional processes and tasks, interpersonal issues, and time.

Understanding Institutional Processes and Tasks. One of the first steps in understanding the scope of the role is learning institutional processes and tasks. All the women mentioned that this took some time; however, there were varying levels of support to help with the learning process. The women chairs all mentioned different opportunities offered at the

university or college level to help them orient to the job and learn about particular topics such as annual evaluation or hiring; however, there were varying levels of satisfaction with what was covered. Only half of the chairs attended an orientation at the university level, and many found the topics covered to be very broad in scope.

Interpersonal Issues. Within the earlier piece of the framework, which focused on Conceptual Understanding of the job, several interpersonal issues were identified. In this area, the associated skills needed to manage those pieces will be discussed as they relate to personality and learning about themselves, managing conflict, and refining their communication skills.

The first piece is understanding how personality contributes to how an individual leads and interacts with others. The chairs indicated that knowledge of how they react in different situations and how they are perceived by others is critical to managing a diverse group of individuals. A second piece of understanding yourself and others is learning to delegate. Multiple chairs expressed that delegation can be difficult, especially when learning a new role, becoming acquainted with new people, and learning whom to trust. However, working on compartmentalization and delegation are valuable skills to develop early to manage the workload.

Managing conflict was one of the most significant interpersonal issues, and the participants expressed a desire for more training to develop skills in this area. Particularly egregious conflicts were discussed, but there was also the element of how to approach difficult conversations with others. Learning to balance when and how to push back against those who challenge you was a particular area mentioned, especially while getting to know people and trying to determine how the relationship will evolve. Some women participated in a few

workshops on conflict, which helped build their skills but did not address the lack of authority they indicated they felt when dealing with tenured faculty members.

Learning to hone communication skills for different situations is also related to dealing with conflict. Setting a tone for the department is vital for a new chair, specifically as it relates to providing stability during a period of transition. Other communication elements revolved around when to email versus having in-person conversations and how to craft messages so they are understood as intended and do not create misinterpretations. There was also an implied message about what to include in writing, considering what could be requested later if a grievance were filed or in cases where someone submits a Freedom of Information (FOIA) request.

Time. The issue of time was a recurring challenge when it came to developing and honing the skills necessary for the role. Similar to earlier challenges associated with having time to devote to learning the job, there were feelings that there was not enough time to learn new skills. Multiple chairs described a feeling of inefficiency as they struggled to compartmentalize all the tasks they needed to accomplish. When working on chair responsibilities, they felt guilty that they should be working on their research, and vice versa. All the chairs thought that learning how to manage job tasks efficiently, along with some general time management techniques, could be helpful. Despite many of their institutions offering various types of professional development training, the chairs often felt that they were not encouraged to participate, as it would take time away from other responsibilities, including their research.

Skill Development-Successes. Despite being overwhelmed, the women chairs embraced a few positive aspects of working to develop new skills. While the questions participants were asked did not specifically address challenges and successes related to Skill Development, two strong themes emerged in this area: building confidence and developing self-capacity.

Building Confidence. Throughout the year, the women chairs saw an increase in their understanding of the job and the skills needed to manage the role. As the academic year progressed, they found themselves embracing the academic calendar and the cycle of tasks they encountered at different points. Many acknowledged that the first time working through a specific process was daunting, but they found themselves more confident in what they could accomplish when they reached the other side. There was also clarity that came from knowing what skills would be needed the next time to adjust the approach used or the overall process.

Developing Self-Capacity. Each chair came to the role with a unique skill set; however, all the chairs found value in engaging in opportunities that allowed them to grow. Whether this came from finding a way to connect their research skills to solve departmental problems or working on developing new skills that directly impact the department's work, the women all acknowledged that self-development would help them move forward in their careers, regardless of whether they planned to stay in administration or not.

Reflective Practice-Challenges. According to Gmelch and Buller (2015), the last component new academic leaders must develop is Reflective Practice. In the context of leadership development, reflection is crucial for ongoing improvement. Taking the time to understand what motivates them in their decision-making and how this aligns with or differs from their values demonstrates a commitment to learning. In the context of leadership, reflection is a valuable tool that helps leaders stay aligned with who they are and the type of leader they aspire to be. Participants were asked specific questions about Reflective Practice such as whether they engaged in reflection and how often. Many did not initially think they were very reflective but were actually practicing the behaviors more than they thought. Three significant challenges

arose in relation to Reflective Practice: time was again at the top of the list, followed by well-being and living one's values.

Time. Feeling that there is little time to complete tasks, it is unsurprising that time is often cited as a top challenge when engaging in Reflective Practice. While all the chairs felt constantly pulled in multiple directions and did not have time to reflect, they participated in more reflective activities than they realized. In some cases, there was a fine line between taking time to analyze what happened versus overthinking or doubting their decisions. Guilt also resurfaced when they thought about how they had spent their time and thought they should be working on something else. This also became an issue with devoting time to family, which will be discussed further in the next section on well-being.

Well-being. Whether or not one has a significant other or children, the role can quickly take over life outside of work. Many of the chairs described the need to force themselves to take care of themselves and not just focus on trying to get everything done, especially because that was not always possible. Discussions about neglecting physical activity and diet were shared, as well as concerns about being unable to sleep. For those chairs with children, guilt was a feeling that came back when discussing the need to leave to pick up a child from practice or attend an afternoon game. Even though they would be back working later in the evening, there was still a sense that, as women, they needed to work harder than their male colleagues to prove they could manage the job.

Living Your Values. A challenge that did not come up as often but was clearly an issue for those who shared it is being a leader who is faithful to their values. When an institution fails to take action that aligns with its leaders' ideals, it can be challenging to focus on daily tasks when more significant issues appear to be unaddressed. For some, the institution may engage in

discussions about creating change in a particular area, but when there is no action to back up the discussion, it is challenging to be the one who must continually remind the administration that words without action do not lead to change.

Reflective Practice-Successes. Reflection revealed many challenges, yet the positives shared within this theme were just as numerous. Gmelch and Buller (2015) discussed Reflective Practice as a "habit of the heart" (p.48). This was evident in the comments from the chairs in this study, as they reflected on their time in the role and acknowledged the positive aspects they experienced. The two themes that emerged focused on celebrating one's successes and investing time in oneself.

Celebrating Your Successes. When serving as chair, it can seem like there is no break in dealing with negative issues. Amid the challenges, the chairs shared the importance of not losing sight of the good that is happening. Even though the problems seemingly take the most time, the chairs discussed the many positive aspects of the job, which include taking time to honor the achievement of becoming a department chair and acknowledging when you see constructive changes (big or small) in your unit.

Investing Time in Yourself. One can easily become overtaken by the duties of being a chair and still maintaining a research portfolio. The chairs interviewed articulated the need to dedicate time to their own development and reflection as it will help them personally and influence how they lead the department. Within this space, it was also noted that taking time to develop support networks was critical to managing the position. Finding others with whom to discuss issues or simply commiserate was important in managing the stress that comes with being a chair.

Schlossberg's Transition Theory - Challenges and Successes

In addition to Gmelch and Buller's (2015) Exploring Academic Leadership framework, examining the data through Schlossberg's (1995) Transition Theory revealed various challenges and successes. Many of the findings were similar to those mentioned earlier regarding Conceptual Understanding, Skill Development, and Reflective Practice; however, additional findings emerged using the 4 S's that Schlossberg identifies as affecting a transition: Self, Situation, Strategy, and Support. Table 3 introduces the topics, and a summary of each "S" will follow, including associated successes identified in each of the four categories. Challenges will only be discussed as they pertain to the Self and Situation categories, as the framing of Support and Strategy focuses more on what has been helpful to the chair's transitions and did not present specific challenges.

Table 3: Challenges and successes data analyzed using the 4 S's of Schlossberg's transition theory: self, situation, support and strategy

Self-Challenges	
Role of Gender	• Dealing with living up to female gender stereotypes as a caregiver • Navigating explicit and implicit sexism
Intersectionality	• Gender combined with other identity factors such as age, race, and ability contributed to the "hidden work" • Being the first black woman to lead her department at an institution where few women of color serve in leadership created a sense of isolation • Having a visual impairment and constantly having to advocate for accessibility just to complete tasks • Dealing with older, male faculty who do not feel a young female can tell them what to do
Personal Life and Self-Care	• Always feeling exhausted and staying up late or using weekends to catch up on work • Dealing with guilt when leaving work to go to help take care of children • Many had a hard time setting boundaries and things like physical fitness were the first to come off the calendar

Table 3 (cont'd)

Self-Successes	
Learning About Self	• Chairs learned how personality and previous experiences influenced their leadership approach
Gender	• Women who had other women to learn from who were already serving in leadership positions had better feelings about moving into leadership • Acknowledging that being in the chair role can help with creating change for other women
Perceptions of Self	• Over the course of the year, the women all felt they were more confident in the role due to moving through different experiences
Situation-Challenges	
Unplanned Transition	• ½ of the women did not plan to apply for the chair role
Department and Organizational Structures and Issues	• The first time managing administrative staff can come with power struggles • The selection process can create a tone for the transition and the amount of time a chair has to prepare to step into the role • Those chairs who came from other institutions dealt with learning institutional operations at the same time as learning about their department
Lack of Expectations	• None of the chairs received formal job descriptions or had in-depth conversations about expectations with their deans
Changing Relationships	• For those leading a department they have worked in as faculty, they can no longer talk to their colleagues the same way. • Having to find new colleagues to trust
Minoritized Identities	• Half of the chairs were the first women to hold the role in their department • Combining gender with additional identity factors creates "hidden labor" that adds to the workload
Situation-Successes	
Selection Process	• The search process provided some chairs with an opportunity to meet with stakeholders and gain a better understanding of the breadth of the role
Connection to Predecessor	• Having time to overlap with the previous chair and continued access to them throughout the year was helpful

Table 3 (cont'd)

Support-Successes	
Dean's Office	• Having access to the dean and the associate deans was key to navigating issues • College-level workshops provided by the dean's office provided context and an opportunity to network with other chairs
Connection to Predecessor	• Having a previous chair who can mentor you before you officially start the role helps with understanding the department • Connecting with the previous chair throughout the year helped with the learning curve
University Resources	• University orientations and workshops provided context for the job and how to operate within the broader institution • Using central support offices helped with navigating certain issues
Developing a Community	• Developing connections with other chairs, and specifically other women chairs, was done either internally to the institution or externally at conferences • Having supportive partners/spouses, friends, and even parents was discussed as helpful in balancing the demands of life
Affirmations and Encouragement	• Knowing colleagues and your dean support you provide many of the chairs with confidence they are doing a good job
Strategy-Successes	
Relationship Building	• Ability to develop new communities to collaborate with was a positive • Opportunity to establish expectations with faculty to create a department where everyone feels supported
Self-Care and Boundary Setting	• Finding ways to destress was important to self-care • Setting the boundaries to actually do those things became a priority as the chairs planned for the next year
Taking Time for Development and Reflection	• Chairs came to acknowledge that taking time for their own development was helpful in becoming a more effective leader
Finding Meaning	• Having the opportunity to help the department and affect the lives of faculty and students was viewed as a privilege.

Self-Challenges. Within Schlossberg's Transition theory, Self is the most complex category. Self is about what each person brings into their transition. This includes all personal and demographic factors (e.g., gender, race, age, ability) and psychological resources (e.g., self-efficacy, values, resilience) (Schlossberg et al., 1995). While each factor can play a role in a chair's transition, the intersectionality of the different identities the women shared also created additional complications. Each chair was asked about their identities and shared certain aspects

of themselves that they found affected their transition experience. With the study's focus on women chairs, specific questions were asked about gender and if they perceived it as playing a role in their transition. The experiences related to challenges fell into three main themes: the role of gender, intersectionality, and personal life and self-care.

Role of Gender. All of the women chairs shared experiences of how their gender has influenced their approach to the job and how they were treated differently because they either did or did not live up to the feminine ideals others held for them. In some cases, sexism was blatantly observed, while other situations were less overt, causing some of the women to question if gender was a factor in the Situation. Many of the women chairs felt they still needed to work harder than male colleagues to prove themselves and gain trust.

Traditional stereotypes portray women playing more of a caregiver role than their male counterparts (Schlossberg et al., 1995). While not always true, many of the women interviewed expressed a strong inclination to care for the overall unit's well-being, which was not often seen in their male colleagues. The emotional labor that came from this place of caring added to their responsibilities, yet, they knew the pastoral aspects of the job were needed to help individuals in the department feel seen.

Intersectionality. Just as being a woman affected how each of the chairs approached leadership, combining their gender with their additional identity factors brought more hidden labor to the surface. Whether being the first black woman to lead the department at a primarily white institution or navigating a disability in a space where you are constantly met with accessibility issues, the time needed to devote to working through the complexities is not insignificant. Additional age-related issues also created extra work for a couple of the chairs.

Being a younger woman in a department with many older, mostly male colleagues led to tensions of constantly feeling challenged and a lack of confidence in their abilities.

Personal Life and Self-Care. The women had slightly different home situations, which led to varying approaches to setting boundaries and caring for themselves. Despite some of those differences, a common theme of feeling exhausted resonated across all of the women. The constant feeling of needing to work on either chair responsibilities or their research led to losing weekends and insufficient sleep. Taking time to exercise became a priority as many noticed physical changes due to neglecting their fitness or increasing their alcohol consumption. Having children sometimes helped with setting aside time to devote to their families, but even then, thoughts of work would still overtake their minds, rather than allowing them to be present in the moment.

Self-Successes. While the women chairs experienced numerous challenges related to the Self category, the positives they shared were crucial to their transition. Since Self encompasses all of the personal and psychological factors of each individual., some of the same categories discussed in other sections will also be seen here. The difference is how extremely personal these themes were and how they are often not discussed with others. The top themes centered on learning about themselves (including their previous experiences), the role of gender, and perceptions of Self.

Learning About Self. For many of the chairs, this was their first time serving in a formal leadership role, and this step was accompanied by learning about how personality and previous experiences influence one's leadership approach. They indicated that understanding the tendencies someone has when confronted with difficult situations or when to let go of control and delegate was essential to building trust with colleagues. It was also important to

acknowledge how to manage the emotions that come with balancing the workload with personal responsibilities and the guilt that arises from constantly feeling like you should be doing something else. Additionally, this relates to accepting that taking on the chair role will affect research productivity, which has been a hard shift for some. They still thought of themselves as researchers first, so letting that identity take a backseat from other priorities could be challenging.

Despite many not previously holding formal leadership roles, the chairs mentioned various helpful experiences they could rely on during their transition. Some found that they were applying their research skills in different ways, and even some of the concepts they studied within their discipline were helpful in managing and leading. Serving as an associate chair or graduate director in the department imparted a better understanding of administrative operations and enabled some to develop administrative skills. Professional development earlier in their careers also provided foundational knowledge, which proved extremely valuable as department chairs. These opportunities often came from external disciplinary or grant-reviewing organizations focusing on developing capacity in areas such as consensus-building or administrative work.

Gender. Although much of what was related to gender was viewed as challenging, a few items were considered successes. At some institutions, there was already a significant number of women in top leadership positions, so the initial feelings about becoming a woman chair were primarily positive. The humanities fields were also seen as making more strides with gender issues than the natural sciences. Women found more female colleagues in leadership positions to connect with, making them feel less isolated in these roles. In previous sections, the discussion about the hidden work for women has been substantial. However, the ability to create change for

other women was not lost on the chairs interviewed; they saw themselves as conduits for further change, especially in terms of mentoring and advancing women.

Perceptions of Self. At each interview, the women were asked to place themselves on a 1-5 scale based on how transitioned into the chair role they each felt. The majority of the chairs remained consistent in their placement, and a similar movement towards a sense of full transition was observed from one interview to the next. Much of this was based on feeling a stronger sense of confidence due to being in the role and experiencing the different pieces firsthand. Going through a reappointment, promotion, and tenure cycle or submitting a budget for the department were a couple of examples shared that allowed a few of the chairs to become more trusting of their abilities. There were still hesitations to say they felt fully transitioned, even after making it through their first academic year. Much of this feeling of hesitancy was due to knowing there were still pieces they had not encountered, and until they did, they would not feel like the transition was complete.

Situation-Challenges. The second "S" discussed within Schlossberg's Transition Theory is Situation. Within Situation, multiple factors contribute to the transition experience: circumstances around the initiation of the transition (e.g., was it expected, or how much time did they have to prepare), the change in role (e.g., how different will the new role be, and is it viewed positively or negatively), how much control does the individual have in the transition, and are there additional stressors the individuals must deal with.

In this study, half of the chairs did not initially plan to step into the role; some even felt pushed to become the chair. While a few had more time than others to adjust to the transition, everyone in this situation mentioned that stepping into the role was not what they had planned for this stage of their career. Their motivation to take the role was more about serving the

department than advancing their career, especially since they knew this role would take them away from their research. Other challenges the chairs discussed related to Situation fit into themes about learning how to work with current organizational structures and issues, a lack of expectations provided to them, changing relationships, and minoritized identities relating to gender, race, and ability.

Organizational Structures and Issues. Any new job brings with it a learning curve; however, how someone is selected for the position can set a tone for the transition. The timing of the search process, especially when seeking external candidates, often did not provide sufficient notice for the new chair to prepare for the role adequately. Depending on when the search committee would decide, it could be too late to have a chair start in the fall. Two of the chairs did not have enough time to wrap up their current work obligations and required their start date to be pushed back to spring. Much of this process is determined by what is happening in the department, and in the case of one of the other participants, the department culture required the dean to intervene and ask someone to assume the role within days since they had to relieve the current chair of their duties.

Stepping into a leadership role was the first time many were responsible for managing administrative staff positions. Some individuals in staff roles were long-time department employees with their own ideas for how things should run. This required the new chairs to balance defining their authority while also taking the time to learn from these key individuals. Other departments struggled to fill and retain staff roles due to a lack of resources, resulting in existing staff taking on additional responsibilities and often leading to burnout.

Lack of Expectations. One of the most surprising findings was that none of the women chairs in the study received any type of formal job description or meeting to discuss

expectations. Some pieces were discussed during the interview process or at meetings throughout the year, but the lack of guidance was especially challenging for those stepping into a formal role for the first time. Many of the women noted that they were hopeful that after their first evaluation with the dean, they would have more clarity and direction.

Changing Relationships. Over half of the chairs interviewed mentioned that the nature of the job leads to a significant change in who you can talk to about job-related topics. As discussed in other sections, this challenge presented differently depending on the existing relationships. For those leading a department they previously worked in, there were more drastic changes to friendships, which could no longer exist as they had in the past. Becoming the chair altered what the new chair could discuss and what their colleagues were willing to share with them.

As new relationships developed, learning who could be trusted was a new challenge. A few chairs found their colleagues taking advantage or testing the limits of the new chair. Those from a minoritized identity group often found fewer individuals like them as they moved into leadership, which made it even more challenging to talk about the different issues confronting them. Others were unsure they could fully trust individuals at their home institution because they did not know which of the other chairs on campus might be acquainted with the individuals in the department they oversee.

Minoritized Identities. With half of the women becoming the first woman chair in their department's history, the impact of this varied across the women but was still a substantial factor in their transitions. White males remain the majority in many leadership spaces that these women entered. Two of the chairs found it especially shocking walking into meetings with other department chairs in their college or from across the university and finding them heavily populated by white males. The women shared that within their colleges and departments, there

was more diversity in terms of gender and even race; therefore, the fact that they did not see the same diversity among their fellow chairs came as a surprise. As mentioned earlier, those who held additional minoritized identities, in this case, race, age, and ability, found themselves confronted with additional "hidden" labor that took even more of their time.

Situation-Successes. Although the number of successes related to the Situation was not as plentiful as in other areas, they are no less important. For the 50% of the chairs interviewed who sought the role, having the time to think about and plan for it gave them an advantage over those who were pushed into the role. Those who were able to participate in a thorough selection process were provided with an overview of the role and began meeting some of the key groups with whom they would be working.

Even though none of the chairs received formal expectations, those who had access to their predecessors felt fortunate to tap into their knowledge base. Some of the previous chairs also left varying levels of documentation outlining the responsibilities of the roles as they understood them. Lastly, for some, moving into the role in a department they worked in for numerous years and knew to be relatively healthy provided a sense of security for the incoming chair.

Support-Successes. The types of Support someone can access during their transition can be critical to their success in the role. As Schlossberg (1995) discussed, the types of Support sources can and should come from different sources, including institutions and communities, close, trusting relationships, family units, and friends. The women chairs participating in the study were open about their struggles. They shared the importance of having robust Support systems in place to help them manage the complexities of the new role along with other obligations outside of work. Support structures were shared as a positive aspect of the role, and

therefore, the themes are all presented as successes. Critical areas of Support came from the dean's office, including connecting with their predecessor, utilizing university resources, developing communities, and receiving affirmations and encouragement.

Dean's Office. While it was mentioned earlier in challenges that chairs did not receive specific expectations from the dean, many mentioned how important it was to have access to either their dean or an associate dean in the college to contact with questions. Those who had workshops offered by their college also found them helpful in learning how things operated within their local context. The chairs also discussed feeling supported when they could negotiate additional support structures, with some receiving more resources for research or types of administrative assistance.

Connection to Predecessor. Not all of the women chairs could speak to the previous chair; however, those who could connect found it extremely helpful. For some, the interactions began as soon as they were named chair. Being invited to sit in on meetings or copied in on emails allowed the transition to happen gradually. Others were fortunate to have their predecessor still in the department and were able to connect as needed. In any of these situations, access to the previous chair's departmental knowledge made the intense learning curve somewhat easier.

University Resources. Orientations, workshops, and resources all existed at each institution with varying levels of success. Half of the chairs attended a university-level orientation, and most found that it provided context for their job and the broader institution. Additional workshops and meetings for chairs and other academic leaders also offered higher-level perspectives on policies or tasks throughout the year. Outside of specific opportunities, some of the chairs found centralized university offices helpful when dealing with precarious

departmental issues. Having resources on campus to support problem-solving was extremely useful in providing both informational and emotional context.

Developing a Community. Just as new relationships were connected to the Strategy, developing a community was a much-needed Support structure that many of the chairs mentioned. Finding connections with other chairs or women leaders in similar situations worked for some at their institutions, and for others, those relationships were established externally through professional conferences or networks. The other aspect of developing systems of Support was having a community outside of academia. Having supportive partners, spouses, friends, and even parents was discussed as helpful in balancing life's demands. Those with children could offload some of the responsibilities; for others, these individuals kept them centered and connected to life outside of work.

Affirmations and Encouragement. The overall sentiment from the chairs was that they did not regularly receive feedback or praise. It tended to stand out when it did happen, especially if the feedback came from the dean. Sometimes, the change in behavior shifted the department culture and could be easily seen and celebrated; however, for others, receiving comments from fellow chairs and even students helped build their confidence. Department chairs often struggle to determine whether they are making a difference, and even small acknowledgments can motivate them to continue in a role that sometimes leaves them feeling stuck and unimpactful.

Strategies-Successes. As Schlossberg (1995) mentioned in the description of the 4 S's in Transition Theory, Strategy is what helps individuals cope with the stressors of the transition. The three types of coping Strategies are to try to modify the Situation, control the problem, or manage the stress after a Situation has occurred. The coping Strategies depend on what is happening with the other three S's. Depending on the type of Situation, the factors of Self, and

the types of Support, these can all influence the Strategy a chair chooses to help them manage the transition. One woman's Strategy may not be as helpful to another based on the other factors present in the transition, and different Strategies may be needed at different times. Participants were asked about the different types of Strategies they used, and four areas emerged from the interviews: relationship building, self-care and boundary setting, setting aside time for reflection and learning, and finding meaning. Since Strategies were also discussed as a way to manage challenges instead of as challenges themselves, the emerging themes are all classified as successes.

Relationship Building The shifting relationships and isolation in the role were presented as challenges; however, the opportunity to build new relationships and establish collaborations was viewed as a success. Six of the eight women interviewed referenced the need to expand or redefine their community throughout their first year. Finding colleagues to work through new situations was vital to navigating the role and finding a sense of community. The other positive aspect of relationship building was defining relationships with faculty about expectations to create a department where everyone has the information they need to succeed and feel supported.

Self-Care and Boundary Setting. Throughout the first year, the chairs did not always take care of themselves, but there were certain practices shared that helped to manage the stress of the workload. For a few women, exercise was an item placed on the calendar that could rarely, if ever, be scheduled over. Knowing that they needed this to relieve stress, setting aside specific time for fitness was not always easy but was a priority. The chairs also helped relieve stress by allowing time for things that brought them happiness, such as spending time with family, walking the dog, or listening to a favorite podcast. While some chairs were better at not letting the job take over their calendar, others were thinking ahead to how they would work to manage

this in the future. A few of the women expressed a clear need to work on compartmentalizing. Accepting that the job does not need you 24 hours a day was a struggle, but being available and working day and night was not something they knew could be sustained.

Taking Time for Development and Reflection. The lack of time to dedicate to all aspects of the job was an ongoing challenge mentioned in every part of the study; however, there was an acknowledgment that one must make room to invest time in learning the job, developing new networks, and acquiring skills. When the chairs could set the boundary and take the time, it helped strengthen their capacity as leaders. This did not happen frequently throughout the first year, but after making it through the first year, six of the chairs expressed that they had a better understanding of what they needed to advocate for to make this happen. Plans to attend specific development sessions and engage with different groups to help expand their networks were a few Strategies they wanted to adopt.

Finding Meaning. The women chairs shared that it was sometimes hard not to get lost in the negativity that comes with the job. When that happens, connecting back to why they took the job is essential to moving forward. Watching the department's community shift and being the one to foster those changes was not lost on the chairs. The potential to help the department and positively impact the lives of faculty and students was viewed as a privilege, and the benefits that come from it far outweigh the negatives.

Illustrations of the Experience

At the conclusion of the second interview, each participant was asked to take a moment to draw or describe an image that conveyed the experience of their first year as department chair. Some only needed a few moments, while others took 10-15 minutes to reflect on the prompt.

Table 4 summarizes each participant's drawing and the key themes they discussed when explaining their illustration. Screenshots of the images will be integrated in the next chapter.

Table 4: Summary of descriptive images

Pseudonym	Drawing Description	Theme(s)
Kira	Bungee cords attached to every limb and having them all pulled at the same time	• Constantly feeling pulled by the urgency of other people's requirements • Feeling that she does not have the time to manage all the requests coming at her • There is a tension between the responsibilities
Suzanne	A garden built on the foundation of the department with multiple tornadoes interspersed in the flowers and butterflies. She put herself in the center as the chair, asking, "What else can I do?"	• There is a "totality of the good and the bad" that comes with the job • In the midst of chaos, there is still growth • The chair is a service position trying to deal with a wide range of situations
Pippin	Nature scene with flowers and one weed growing among them. The sun is shining, but storms are on the horizon.	• The department is mostly positive but needs to be tended to keep the weed from taking over • Having to deal with a conflict that has been building over time
June	Six different pictures representing different roles the chair represents. Arrows in the center show the motion of moving not just cyclical but across to whatever role is needed. The roles represented speaking to groups of people, working on tasks/email on the computer, small group collaborations and solving problems, one-on-one interactions to help address challenges, banging her head against the wall, and being isolated because of the nature of the role	• The complexities of the job require a variety of skill sets • The chair has many different identities depending on the group they are working with • The job is challenging, and it often feels like there is no one to rely on • Having to work on learning about yourself so you can embody the different roles that are needed

Table 4 cont'd

Pseudonym	Drawing Description	Theme(s)
Susan	A house is on fire, and as the chair, she only has a watering can to extinguish it. People surround her, oblivious to the fire, asking for what they need.	• Not having the best tools to handle the job • Being confronted with challenging situations • Dealing with colleagues who have no interest in helping the department • Loneliness-Other people getting to do what they want while she stands alone as the chair
Ollie	Leading her department across a river, trying to make sure they have what they need to be successful and not fall in, although some people may decide to jump in and swim on their own	• Being a servant-leader and making sure everyone has what they need • Bringing people together to be successful as a department and as individuals • There are some things out of your control, no matter what you do.
Jane	Drawing of her head surrounded by fireworks and her body has the letters of her department's acronym to show how she feels she IS the department	• Feeling like there is so much to learn and being bombarded by all of the different pieces of the job • The position is viewed as a figurehead not always having perceived power • Caring for the department so much that it becomes her identity to ensure its success and that of her colleagues
Clara	Driving on a set of adjacent highway clover leaf sections. Potholes and construction exist, but once you know the road, you can avoid some obstacles. Other drivers cannot be controlled and can push you off course and create additional obstacles.	• Learning the job takes time, but it does become easier as you learn the processes • The job is complex, and dealing with people can take a lot of your time • The need for continuous learning to deal with new obstacles

The images the participants shared brought together many of the concepts discussed earlier in the findings. The challenges associated with the job always seemed to be front and center, with fires and storms representing obstacles, but growth and achievement were also expressed. All but two of the chairs discussed an element of hope when sharing their examples,

and the two who did not include something positive shared illustrations overshadowed by feelings of helplessness that they did not have the capacity or tools to meet the needs of the job.

Additional Factors

When initially framing this study, a third research question was presented:

Sub-question 3: Are there other factors that relate to the transition experience of women department chairs throughout their first year?

After examining the factors the women shared, most fit into the categories already explored; however, one individual shared a substantial factor affecting her transition that fell outside of the other themes. Clara, the one chair who came in as an external hire, came from a less prestigious research institution. While still a very active researcher, Clara felt marginalized by other chairs or directors who often tried to overexplain certain situations, which came across to her as "sort of blatantly like you don't rank in terms of that kind of research acumen and prowess, and that's probably why you're not getting attention." Clara's department deviated from the typical chair selection process and hired her based on what she could contribute to the department rather than her research portfolio. "People that are really focused on their research are going to pay much less attention and spend much less time on the administrative part. And maybe that's okay, but that's not what the department wanted, and so they hired me". She acknowledged that her ambitions are not to "get all the accolades" when it comes to research but still noticed "a lot of prejudice against my trajectory and where I came from." Not many of her new colleagues engaged with her about her research; they would talk about administrative issues, but it was a shift for her to have a "different kind of reputation, a different reason to respect and engage with somebody."

Summary

Across the different themes, several similarities emerged throughout the stories of the eight women chairs. This chapter provided an overview of the elements across various components of the conceptual framework to show where there were similarities and where the differences emerged. In the next chapter, the women's narratives will be detailed and organized around a central theme that emerged from the data about their experiences being a time of learning.

CHAPTER 5: THE LEARNING EXPERIENCE

The previous chapter provided a summary of the main findings from the study, broken down by the theoretical framework that guided the study. Challenges and successes were analyzed in relation to Gmelch and Buller's (2015) domains of effective leadership development (i.e., Conceptual Understanding, Skill Development, and Reflective Practice) and Schlossberg's (1995) 4 S's of transition theory (Self, Situation, Support, and Strategy). The following chapter will provide details to answer the main research question:

- What are the lived experiences of new women department chairs, in terms of challenges and successes, as they transition into their new professional role over the course of their first year?

A central theme that emerged from the experiences of the new chairs throughout their first year was that it was a time of learning. Attention to the learning experience has not always been a central part of a new chair's transition process. Some chairs felt that because they were a good researcher, they would be able to lead a department (Gmelch & Buller, 2015), while others did not plan to invest much time in the role because they did not plan to pursue leadership and only wanted to return to their faculty role (Hecht, 1999); some in this study, felt they became beleaguered with issues as soon as they started and have been having a hard time finding the time to learn. Despite the differing reasons the women chairs in this study had for taking the role, all the chairs recognized there was a learning curve they needed to embrace. While initial conversations focused on learning the specific tasks and responsibilities of the job, the learning process also extended to self-discovery for the women, exploring who they are as leaders and how their first-year experience developed their leadership capacity. Purposefully engaging with learning throughout the first year helped build the confidence of the new chairs by not only

developing new skills but also developing their self-efficacy. Taking the time to learn provided the women with foundational knowledge from which they could build, enabling them to address issues and move forward in finding ways to create positive change for their colleagues and the overall department.

With the chair position described as "probably the most important, least appreciated, and toughest administrative position(s) in higher education" (Buller, 2012, p.3), institutions need to provide support to the individuals taking on these complex roles. With the lack of women represented in these roles, it is especially critical to understand how they navigate the role and what can be done to help continue preparing and developing women and others from traditionally underrepresented populations. Using stories and examples from the eight women chairs, this chapter explains the lived experiences of the new women department chairs as they identified areas for learning, navigated challenges that came with each of these areas, and found assistance and resources to support them during their first year in the role. Explorations of these three key themes begins with understanding the different learning needs of first-year department chairs, including gaining insight into the scope of the role, learning institutional processes and tasks, recognizing the impact you can have as a chair, and learning about yourself as a leader. Challenges will then be discussed as they pertain to the appointment process for new chairs. I will also describe the trials of developing and altering interpersonal relationships, show how societal expectations related to gender and other identity factors influence the transition process, and share the stress of holding space for personal lives and self-care. I will then discuss how the women chairs found support throughout their first year to focus on learning, beginning with how they are appointed, and then exploring the different institutional support structures and

community building. Finally, I will discuss how affirmations and encouragement play a role and illustrate how investing in oneself throughout the process is critical to the transition.

Different Learning Needs of First-Year Chairs

The women chairs entered the role with various understandings about what the position would entail and how they would embody it. Regardless of how they entered the position or their previous experiences, each of the eight new chairs felt thrown into their roles without sufficient preparation. While many felt they knew what to expect when taking on the role, they also faced the reality that a person could not fully understand the position until they were fully sitting in the role. Faculty who never served as a chair can make assumptions about what and why their chairs do things; however, as Suzanne shared, faculty cannot understand the level of responsibility due to the sheer nature of the job and the types of private information that a chair needs to manage. As each chair became acquainted with the role, their institutions and their colleagues, intentionally and unintentionally, cast layers of expectations upon the job, requiring them to be continuous learners. As the women chairs reflected on their first year, the most common areas where they invested time in learning were around the scope of the job responsibilities, institutional processes and organizational structures, understanding their impact as chair, and learning about themselves as leaders. Each of these four learning areas will be discussed in the context of how it appeared as part of each respondent's experience. Readers should note that, although the areas of learning were consistent across respondents, the details of how respondents handled each area of learning varied.

Scope of Job Responsibilities

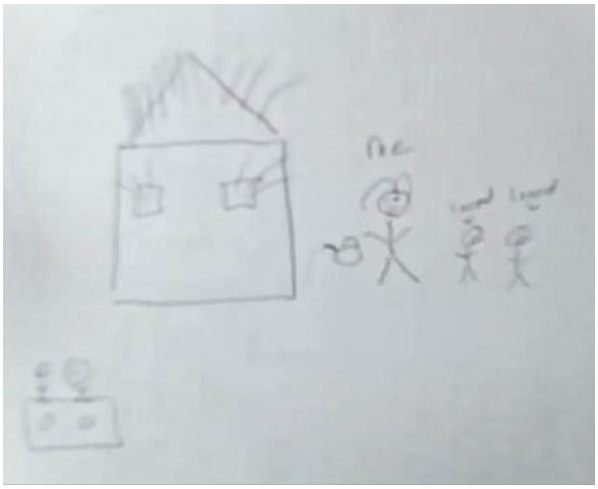
Throughout the process of learning the multiple aspects of the chair role, new situations require skills not all faculty have honed before stepping into management roles. Stepping into the

chair role was the first formal leadership position for seven of the eight women. While some of the women in this study had opportunities to develop leadership skills in advance, many did not consider the skills required of a department chair until they assumed the role. For instance, Pippin and June served in departmental roles such as graduate director or associate chair but had yet to be responsible for leading a unit. Most of the chairs expressed difficulty with not being prepared for the extensive range of responsibilities, let alone finding time to develop skills that would help them manage the role. Suzanne stated, "It is a considerable amount of work, and you have no idea all of the things you're going to be asked to do." There were also references to the sheer scope of the job increasing as institutions push more down to the chairs to handle on the "front lines" with faculty. Clara and Jane recognized that chairs are middle managers but did not understand what that meant until they assumed the role. Clara explained that serving as a chair is akin to middle management, taking direction from above and passing it along, trying to translate what the university is doing and making it understandable and workable within her department. She also shared that she views the role as:

> Someone who's part of the administration, but at a level where it's closer to still being on the ground and dealing with a lot of the day-to-day core missions of the institution in terms of education and teaching and students and things at that level. I try to sort of get across that it's not a boss-type role, and it's not a sort of very high-up leadership type of a role. It's sort of in the middle somewhere. You take a lot of direction from above and often pass that on but are also an advocate for things that are happening in the educational sphere, in the classroom, which you often get separated from when you're a little bit higher up.

Susan came in knowing the first-year learning curve would be hard but soon realized that her institution is very top-down. The level of bureaucracy intensified tasks that were seemingly not as complex for chair colleagues she spoke with who served at institutions with more of a shared governance approach. Susan shared how "the job just does become bigger, and that is one of the most stunning things to me about the job, is that it was three times what I thought the workload was because of all the processes in place that universities are doing." When reflecting on her time in the role, Susan used the vivid metaphor of a house on fire, and she was the one trying to extinguish the flames with only a watering can. She was surrounded by people, but they were there “telling me what they need, oblivious to the fires.” She reflected that year one felt like those other people were “getting to do what they want” and were unaware of the fire burning in front of them while she stood alone with her meager water supply instead of having the proper tools to extinguish the fire.

Figure 4: Susan’s reflective drawing



Lack of Formal Expectations. It can be especially tough to navigate a new job when you are unsure of the expectations and responsibilities. None of the chairs interviewed received a formal job description or discussion with their dean (that they could recall) about job expectations or how they would be evaluated. Suzanne received the most clarity from her dean

since they asked her to come in and take over a very precarious situation; however, she did not recall receiving any clear expectations the first time she was a chair. Her understanding of the chair's role at that time was to take care of "anything to do with the department." Suzanne expanded on this and shared that she viewed the chair as the "liaison between the department and the administration, and the details of what that would entail just kind of emerge when they were ready."

Ollie shared how her interview for the chair role helped clarify the scope of the position, making her transition less ambiguous than others. During the search, Ollie met with various stakeholders, including faculty, staff, and students, who provided an overview of their perspectives on the chair role and expectations for the person they would hire. Unfortunately, the discussions did not continue after she became chair. Ollie referenced that there may have been an assumption that expectations would be covered in various discussions, but that did not happen.

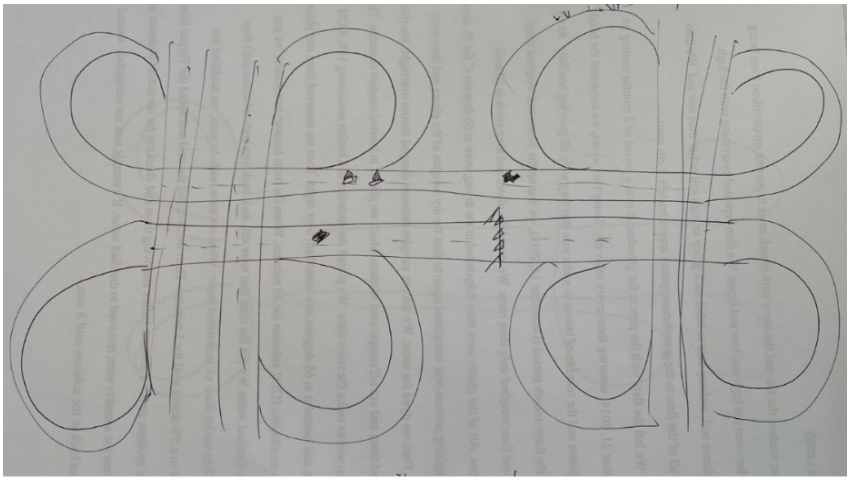
While initial expectations were vague or altogether lacking, the deans and associate deans were highly approachable and willing to engage with the department chairs when questions arose. Jane, Susan, Kira, and Ollie mentioned that sessions offered by an associate dean in their colleges helped them understand specific tasks they needed to complete. Still, the content of the sessions did not always align with a comprehensive set of roles and responsibilities. A few of the chairs also mentioned a lack of receiving feedback throughout their first year; however, almost all the women chairs noted that their college leadership was open to responding to questions and helping problem-solve when the chair contacted them.

Lack of Time. Clara and Jane mentioned that there was no time in the beginning to devote to learning about the job or participating in opportunities that could help manage the role. There was some encouragement from deans or others at the university for Susan, Clara, Pippin,

and June to participate in training. However, Kira and Jane did not feel they were provided the time or space to invest in the opportunities. Susan laid out everything on the calendar but was unsure how to tackle the never-ending email inbox, set aside time for research, and still participate in professional development activities that could enhance efficiency. Clara felt like she was never feeling efficient because she did not fully understand the role and lacked the necessary skills to be effective.

For the first year in the role, everyone interviewed recognized there was a continuous learning curve as the cycle of the academic calendar brings with it new tasks and deadlines. Clara noted that tasks may not present themselves in the same way in the future as when they were first encountered, but knowing the basics of the processes helps build confidence and capacity to tackle the issues. Even with guidance from predecessors, the first time walking through a process or completing an evaluation can become more complex if layers of long-term issues surface and create new problems. Clara provided a highly detailed depiction of the cyclical nature of her first year, represented by "a set of adjacent highway clover leaf sections."

Figure 5: Clara's reflective drawing



“An academic year takes you through one clover leaf, back around to the other one, and back around to the other one.” Potholes and construction were there to represent challenges, but they could change places, so you would not always know where to expect them. There may also be an accident that occurs, making your drive more difficult. Despite all the challenges on the road, Clara also showed “opportunities to loop back around and do U-turns, …and a few places where there's an easy pass detector, and you've got your easy pass, and that's kind of a success.” There were “patterns” that provided enough direction to ensure you could just “follow the road” and “go in the right direction.” Driving on the highway could be considered “repetitive” with “strict rules which it feels to me like all the procedures and policies and the steps and things.”

> There's a lot of stuff that's just very fixed, and you just can't go off the track, but it also can manifest those variable challenges that maybe you, if it's a pothole, it's like you've seen a pothole before, but maybe it's different size pothole, it's a different place in the road, or, you have to think a little bit about how to get around it. Construction, depending, could be a full stop, or a slowdown, or something like that.

When driving on the highway, Clara also thought about what other cars represent:

> [The other cars represent] individual relationships or situations that kind of keep occurring and coming back. It's almost like if you're in your car, and then there's another person in another car, and they just kind of keep following you. It's like they keep coming and finding you. I was told when I came here that two people in my department would be 90% of my issues, and it's totally true. The thought came to me: those two people are also in cars, and they just kind of keep cutting me off, or riding next to me, or honking their horns, or something like that, and it's just like kind of a recurring cycle.

For Suzanne, the feeling that one is always so busy that only surface-level issues can be addressed, without the opportunity for in-depth conversations about more significant systemic or institutional issues, was difficult to manage. June also agreed that there was no time for strategic visioning when you have constant daily demands to deal with. Even balancing the need to move quickly with taking time for deliberation was a constant tension she navigated. Clara mentioned never feeling like there was a gap to pause and reflect, comparing the job to "being in the breakers in the ocean. You just get past the one big wave and, nope, there's another one." For Clara, there was a constant feeling of being pulled in multiple directions and having to juggle all the different needs people were throwing at the chair.

Email Management. A sub-theme related to time was the issue of managing the seemingly never-ending email inbox. Since Suzanne first served as a chair ten years ago, she thinks she now gets five times as many emails. Dealing with emails as a faculty member can be cumbersome; however, the close attention to detail when responding and the constant influx of messages are still aspects that all participants agreed they were unprepared to handle. Ollie developed back issues from being absorbed in handling all the email responses and not taking the time to get up and move. Emails often take longer to write to ensure that the responses are understood as intended. Pippin often writes emails in Word, uses Grammarly to proof, and rereads a dozen times before sending them out.

For emails about significant initiatives, it is vital to ask other stakeholders to approve the message before sending to ensure it contains the correct details and an appropriate tone; however, this can create delays, as June experienced. In one situation, she drafted an email to respond to a situation but needed to wait for approval from other individuals before sending the message. Since she was not the lead on the information in this particular scenario, she could not

move forward without the committee's approval. Even when a follow-up email was received asking why there was no response, she did not have the ability to enforce a timeline, nor did she want to "respond immediately after they sent that because that sends a message about what it takes to get a response from the department."

Learning Institutional Processes and Tasks

For the chairs in this study, understanding the scope of the role began with familiarizing oneself with institutional policies and duties. Each woman noted that this process took time, and the level of support available varied. The women chairs mentioned various opportunities provided by their universities or colleges to aid in orientation and learning specific topics, such as annual evaluations or hiring, which will be discussed later in this section. However, satisfaction levels with the content covered varied significantly. Only half of the chairs attended a university-level orientation, and many felt the topics discussed were overly broad. Jane had a desire for training to provide her with a strong foundation in areas such as budgeting and handling difficult personnel conversations. In fact, all but one person mentioned the difficulties around navigating budget complexities, and Jane described her experience of learning about budgets as "trial by fire." Ollie thought that, once she stepped into the role, she would suddenly understand the budget, but she found that even the administrative staff did not fully understand the budget. Kira was fortunate to receive tailored information from her budget officer to acquaint her with the budget, but she was the only one who referenced this level of engagement.

As the chairs discussed their situations, it became clear that part of learning their roles comes from exposure to how the institution functions and how their department exists and is viewed within that structure. Clara and Jane had the additional complexity of simultaneously learning a new institution. While Jane had been at her institution for a few years, starting during

the COVID-19 pandemic prevented her from coming to campus and getting to know the buildings and others outside of her specific department. For those who have been at an institution for some time, having a general knowledge of what is happening in their department and the broader institution gave them a slight advantage. Pippin and Ollie referenced that their departments did not present many issues and were well-functioning, so they had reasonable expectations when applying for the job. While Susan did not initially seek the job, she also mentioned that knowing there were no contentious situations made it seem like an okay time to take on the role, especially as the first female chair. Unfortunately for Susan, she experienced a highly unusual year, which even her dean acknowledged was filled with abnormal situations. Everything from major institutional restructuring to a faculty member passing away two days after Susan stepped into the role contributed to the chaos. "My dean and my former head, they're like you just got whacked in ways that are not normal in your first year." Susan also inherited a loosely structured organization within her department, which included overseeing several centers. Technically, the centers do not report to her as chair, but she was still responsible for managing various aspects. The previous chair was comfortable with the ambiguous structure, but Susan is less okay with the setup:

> Not because I'm not okay with being in charge, but because I always say, I understand my circus, my monkeys, but I have three extra circuses and monkeys, and that's uncomfortable to me to have people who are under me, but aren't really under me, but I have sign off for them.

Clara moved only days before the spring semester began and was not only thrown into a new department in a new state, but all the department staff was also relatively new. The difficulty was that institutional knowledge was non-existent, as everyone was learning

simultaneously. In other departments, some staff members provided the chairs with the necessary information about how specific processes should be handled. However, this also presented different challenges for the chairs in terms of working with administrative staff.

Managing Administrative Staff. While the person holding the chair role shifts every few years, the staff supporting the role and the department in financial., human resources, and other administrative functions typically do not change at the same rate. Managing staff in these roles was a new experience for six of the new chairs. There was a recognition from the chairs that navigating the relationships with these key team members was essential. Nevertheless, tensions were common as the chairs attempted to balance being supervisors while also learning from the staff and relying on their expertise. June shared a summary of the friction she experienced:

> Chairs are faculty, so there's already a class and culture difference there, but also chairs rotate every 3 years in this department, whereas our admin staff have been here for decades in some cases. They know more than I do about a lot of things. They also operate in a hierarchical system. I think some folks rankle that and other folks have sort of figured out how the hierarchical system works. In that hierarchical system, I am the boss, but figuring that out, I've had a lot of misfires of when to say, this is what we're doing, and when to ask what do you think I should do.

June and Jane came into units with long-time individuals serving in administrative staff jobs. The new chairs needed to learn the processes the staff managed while also navigating the personalities of the people managing those roles. For Jane, one of her employees had worked in their job for decades and required attention to navigating intergenerational differences and overseeing the natural tensions that can occur during transitions. Jane was trying to understand

how this person did their job and received some initial pushback when she asked them to share what they do. Jane clarified why it was vital for the employee to share her responsibilities with the newer faculty and staff, and the employee responded in agreement, confirming that Jane's approach to handling the situation worked. The staff member fully agreed with the approach and even prepared a document outlining her duties to share at their next meeting.

A particular experience June encountered was balancing the relationship with her budget officer, who had served the department for years and had deep departmental knowledge. The budget officer was highly competent, but tension arose when June clarified that, as chair, she is the one who ultimately makes the decisions, despite still learning about the department. In one instance, when funds were needed to support a specific human resource need, June had to push the person to move ahead with the decision she believed was in the department's best interest despite the staff member disagreeing with the decision. Pippin also shared her challenge of dealing with some staff members in the business office who give the impression that they know better than the chair because they have been there longer. Because the staff is proficient in most aspects of the job, it would be a significant loss to the department if they left; therefore, the decision not to confront the controlling behavior is a battle Pippin chose not to fight.

In Susan's department, she tried to stabilize the staff because they were constantly losing people to the richer, hard science colleges that could offer higher salaries. The staff she does have are burned out because they are managing the open positions, which they are having trouble filling. The constant churn also led to a lack of departmental knowledge that did not help onboard a new chair. Amidst this, Susan mentioned the difficulties of being unable to control tenure-track faculty who mistreat staff or order them around as if they were personal secretaries.

None of the staff in her department have been there longer than 18 months, so they are simultaneously building institutional knowledge and developing role competency.

Understanding Your Impact and Driving Change

Regardless of how they entered the role, the motivation to find a connection to their work was crucial for all the women and significantly influenced their approach to being chair. Susan often asked herself why she had taken the job and what kept her from quitting. Some days, there was an answer; others, there was not. Finding the connection to why they are in the role was part of the learning process that also came up for June and Jane, especially on difficult days. Finding the meaning in the job is not as much about being performative as it is about learning how serving in the chair role has the opportunity to set the department up for the future. Suzanne reflected on how often the chair position is thought of negatively, but the good that can come from being in the role often outweighs the bad:

> One thing I think is very sad is the idea that everyone has to take a turn, and so this is mine, rather than being like, of all the people in the world, you are so privileged in a way to have an opportunity like this. To be able to really have a positive impact on things you care about, and the people you care about and even the people you don't care that much about, you could still have a positive effect on them, too.

Clara found meaning in developing community in the department. “I want to use it as an opportunity to deliberately rebuild the community in a way that allows people to sort of interact meaningfully.” She sees value in examining equity and finding ways to build it into the culture. Clara shared how she laid the groundwork through conversations with faculty and staff to work towards creating a place where people could openly discuss issues. During the pandemic,

everyone became increasingly siloed, eroding the ability to resolve problems and engage in civil disagreements. She summarized her approach as:

> I think you have to build towards those difficult changes over a long time because it's not going to be lasting change. It's not going to be sustainable if you try to do everything too fast. You just don't bring people along if you start too fast on some of those changes.

Other chairs also shared how they worked to create positive change. June led her department in developing a set of core values that incorporated staff voices as well. Ollie views the challenge of the job as exciting and is working towards keeping people together to achieve common goals, one of which is to make her department more essential to the college and the university. Jane also shared the importance of being able to "lift up the department" to get more attention for her colleagues' work.

Kira was especially pleased to hire another female faculty member, as she had been the only female in the department for over a decade. In departments where women or other underrepresented groups have not traditionally been present, Kira sees this as an opportunity to help pave the way and increase representation. Hiring a female faculty member in her department for the first time in ten years gave Kira the momentum she needed to continue building. With the new positions the department was granted, Kira has a chance to diversify the department in ways previous chairs have not. Hiring is one tool to help with culture change, and Susan was also excited about two new hires she felt would really help change her department. Their scholarship focused on areas where the department lacked expertise, so bringing them in could keep the unit at the cutting edge of their discipline.

Coming into a department facing turmoil, Suzanne focused on leading the department in developing a set of core values and shaping the department climate. Many change efforts were

just beginning, but she is optimistic about the direction. Having meetings "where people spoke well with each other without having the chair intervene and no one tried to bully or hijack" was an extremely positive sign. Suzanne expanded on this further when discussing how she could take the lead in envisioning new processes that help others work more effectively, specifically in the hiring process. Faculty were able to take a step back and look at their hiring practices deciding to pause hiring for a short period to reassess and be strategic in how new hires will help move the department forward. When confronted with the "bad stuff," Suzanne reminds herself that good exists and can help you forget about the chaos:

> To the degree to which it's good, it's so much better than the bad stuff is bad. But the bad stuff just takes so much effort and attention, and even solving it can sometimes be sort of bittersweet because it was so unpleasant. But just making myself remember, and I think reminding other people, there's really a lot that's good, and you can do a lot to help other people.

After the first interview with the women department chairs, there were very few comments related to success, which is not shocking given their limited time in the role. June and Suzanne, who were between six and seven months in the role, mentioned feeling confident in understanding the overall basics of the role but were still getting to know the people in the department. After the second interview, there was a definite increase in those who felt they understood their responsibilities well and were starting to see more success in laying the groundwork for change.

Experiencing the academic year helped provide a good baseline for planning for the following year. Speaking to the women after the conclusion of the spring semester also brought more affirmations and a growth in confidence. Jane best summarized the role's positive aspects:

"to help support, uplift and amplify faculty, staff and students." Understanding the impact one can have as a chair was not taken lightly. Clara mentioned that, while she may not be teaching in the classroom, she can still have a direct connection to shaping what is happening in the classroom. Ollie also discussed the "highs" of seeing faculty or different initiatives succeed and her enthusiasm for shaping the department. This was evident in the illustration she drew, representing her first year. Ollie's depiction took place in nature, showcasing her department working together while also facing individual hurdles, such as the promotion process. Using a river as the obstacle the department needed to cross, Ollie referenced reaching the other side as the accomplishment they were working toward:

> The idea is keeping people together with common goals to get through budget issues, to get through the other things that come up in the life of the department. I'm thinking in terms of individual success and departmental unit success and keeping people together.

Figure 6: Ollie's reflective drawing

When prompted about her position in the drawing, she placed herself in the front, "trying to get people through." After a bit more reflection, she added that she should actually be "running back and forth" to show the action the chair role requires. Ollie also noted that she did not "put any

people being washed away, but apparently, a couple of people decided to let go and swim on their own."

Learning about Self

For all but one of the chairs, this was their first time serving in a formal leadership role, and this career step accompanied learning about how personality and previous experiences influence one's leadership approach. Understanding the role and learning about colleagues is essential, but recognizing how one's personality contributes to leading and interacting with others was also critical, especially for Pippin and Ollie. Pippin acknowledged that she is very blunt and open and cannot lie. Over the last year, she noticed herself becoming grumpier and had to come to terms with the part of the job that is listening and absorbing what other people are griping about, but it is hard not to get sucked into the negativity. Pippin felt she had to temper her directness, primarily since she cannot lie and has no "poker face." Her predecessor "petted" everyone, and she acknowledged that her approach may seem abrupt to some colleagues, especially when they come to her for advice. Ollie is somewhat the opposite of Pippin in not being very forward or "in your face." She tends not to want to believe "how mean people can be," but was confronted with the reality that not everyone operates with pure intentions, and she needs to work on getting out in front of situations instead of waiting for problems to come to her.

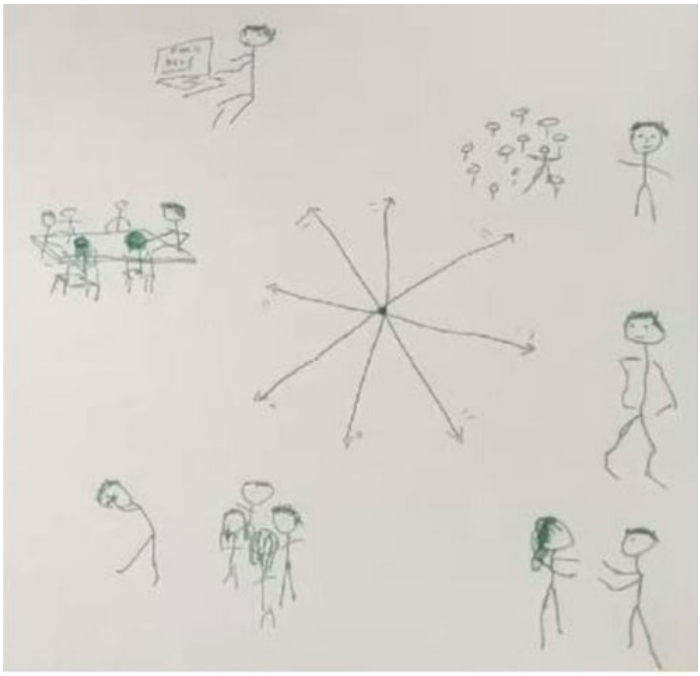
June and Susan realized that they liked to have control and quickly learned that they controlled almost nothing as chair. As a self-identified control freak, Susan finds the lack of control to be the most challenging aspect of the job. Part of this involves coming to terms with the limitations of being unable to do anything about certain situations involving tenure-track faculty. In one example, Susan shared that a tenured faculty member was not treating staff members respectfully, and there seemed to be nothing she could do. "I try to be a decent human

being, and when I can't buffer people who can't be decent human beings, that's what makes the job hard."

June noted progress in knowing when to relax some control and delegate or bring others in to collaborate, but it was a complicated process. "I find it embarrassing because I would have thought of myself as somebody who is good at collaboration and working as part of a team, but discovering how often I'm not good at that has been unpleasant." June shared her thoughts that "faculty want a chair who will take things and take care of them and solve them for them. They want a receptacle for a variety of things they don't want to deal with." While faculty may want the chair to take care of their problems, June initially struggled with trying to solve everything by herself, which she soon realized was not the best way to build relationships, nor was it sustainable when trying to manage the workload.

When June provided her drawing reflecting on her first year as chair, she described it as a "constant, rolling, shifting of different kinds of positions vis a vis other people".

Figure 7: June's reflective drawing



Her drawing consisted of six pictures with arrows in the center to show the motion of cycling through all of the different roles depending on what is needed. The images represent the following:

> speaking, being out in front of something and kind of presenting either to the department or to other people and kind of the ceremonial performance role, to being alone with my computer and the little words say, "help," "need," and "want." Kind of dealing with responding to other people, to bringing people together to solve problems and being in a kind of collaborative, solution, problem-solving mode, to just feel like I'm banging my head against a wall, kind of on my own but very conscious of being on my own, to both small group and one to one kind of interactions, either on zoom or in person listening and addressing challenges.

Despite all of the public roles, June still shared "that being chair feels to be a very, very isolated role." Moving from isolation to a more collaborative place does not always feel like an option for June because that is not how she previously accomplished her work. Reflecting on how she would do that for the next three years was very isolating for June, and she realized the need to collaborate whenever possible and try to build more community and collaboration so she does not get lost in isolation. She also recognized that when she does get back to that place of collaboration, she sees it as more effective and an "overall better feeling place to be."

Dealing with feelings that came from taking on an all-consuming job was a common experience for many of the women. Susan struggled with guilt from balancing her personal and professional responsibilities. Tending to be a people pleaser and wanting to be a team player previously put her in a place where she took on so much service that she became stuck in a mid-career trap. Her service to others was part of why so many wanted her to be chair, but Susan had

been quite nervous about taking on this job because it would take away a significant amount of time from her research, potentially closing some doors. She sees that new possibilities could be opened up by taking on the administrative role, but it is not an easy transition for someone whose identity has been that of a researcher. Ollie and Kira also noted that their identity as researchers was still what they thought of first, despite the significant time devoted to administration. One of Kira's faculty colleagues even prompted her to take more ownership of her new role and to start using her chair title when introducing herself.

Many of the chairs also shared that it was important for them to learn from how they responded to challenging situations. Pippin shared a situation where a faculty member repeatedly challenged her and began yelling at her during a faculty meeting, prompting her to respond with yelling back. Pippin realized she should have addressed the situation in a one-on-one conversation and wrote a letter apologizing for how she had handled it. June also acknowledged that having humility and learning to apologize were surprising skills for her to recognize, but she quickly realized this was critical in her role. “Even if I feel defensive about something, to acknowledge when something I did exacerbated an issue, to own that upfront, it's been a really important tool for me.”

Kira wanted to develop more patience when working to understand the different perspectives others have, and she realized this was particularly challenging for her when the opposition came from someone with a privileged identity who had often had different rules applied to them. A white male faculty in her department asked for paternity leave that fell over the last few weeks of one semester and two weeks of the next semester. Kira eventually “nudged” him to take the leave all in one semester, but it was especially hard for her to deal with

a request like that when she was under pressure not to take her own sabbatical. Kira was open with how she was working on this:

> I can be angry with people behind the scenes, but I'm trying to learn to be really patient with people in dealing with them in the moment. Kind of trying to learn their perspective, trying to understand their perspectives and just developing those kind of leadership skills that stop me from just shouting at somebody when I'm really mad.

Jane also shared her frustrations when responding to requests that seem to come with a sense of entitlement or were not requested from her white male predecessor. Knowing that someone was testing the boundaries because of her gender or race was disappointing and created an additional layer that had to be peeled back whenever dealing with requests from particular individuals.

Perceptions of Self. Within Schlossberg's Transition Theory, there is an element related to how one perceives oneself throughout the transition process. As referenced numerous times, the chairs expected a learning curve stepping into the role. Nevertheless, for some, that curve was much larger than expected, influencing their self-perception as they navigated their first year. At each interview, the women were asked to rate themselves on a 1-5 scale, with 1 representing the start of the transition and 5 representing a feeling of being fully transitioned. With the interviews taking place approximately four to five months apart, there was a noticeable shift in how each of the women chairs perceived themselves in their new roles.

Of those who began their roles in the fall, most placed themselves at a level three at the time of the first interview, which took place approximately six to seven months into the role. Much of this was due to not having gone through an entire year yet and acknowledging that the job's cyclical nature brings new challenges. June felt she was almost at a five in terms of the emotional and identity pieces, but was still between a three and a four in understanding what the

role required. Some tasks that had not been encountered yet but were referenced as essential to the learning process included scheduling courses, conducting evaluations of graduate students and faculty, and compiling a tenure package.

By the time of the second interview, after the conclusion of the academic year, most of these individuals had moved to a 3.5-4.5 on the scale. However, some situations were still coming up that had not been experienced yet. Ollie was preparing for her first budget meeting, and Pippin was in the process of conducting her first faculty search as chair, so both knew these would be significant learning opportunities. One aspect of Susan's experience was the constant loss of staff and the feeling that her unit was not fully operational:

> The staff I do have are spread so thin that it just constantly feels like we're on a hamster wheel playing catch up. And it's combined with I now know how to do the tasks, but with such a weird, uncertain context, it's just very hard to think about how to plan.

Jane was the only one who stayed close to the same initial rating. She initially placed herself at a 3.5 or 3.75, but when we revisited this a few months later, she was surprised she placed herself so high. Reflecting back, she thought 2 or even 1.5 would have better represented her transition. Some of this may have been related to a meeting with the dean that happened close to the first interview, where she told Jane she was doing a good job. Because of that meeting, Jane reflected that perhaps “I was giving myself a little too much credit." During the second interview, she felt more comfortable placing herself at the midway point because "there's just a lot of things that I still want to learn.”

Clara and Kira both assumed the chair role in January and were similar in placing themselves at 2.5 at the first interview. By the time of the second interview, they both moved to a 3.5 on the scale. Kira felt she had a “better sense that I know what I don't know" at this point and

will feel more "anchored" after a full year on the job. As a new member of the institution, Clara was still getting to know people and some of the units she regularly interacted with were undergoing their own leadership transitions. Once those new people start, she hopes to establish new relationships. Finding a community of peers she could call on was one of the most significant needs for her to feel more transitioned.

Serving as a chair once before, Suzanne was an outlier on the scale because she understood what it takes to be a chair and had the support networks in place. She noted that taking an interim role presented some new challenges in thinking about how she would approach different situations. There was also an additional context of learning about a new discipline, but the mechanics of the chair role were still the same. Reflecting on the first time she was a chair, she thought she may have placed herself at a four or five at the time of the first interview. This was due in part to the supportive colleagues and their knowledge of Suzanne and the type of work she had already been doing in the department.

Across all the women chairs, they were very thoughtful about the different learning they were engaging in and how it could help the department. Experiences among the women varied; however, when it came to understanding the role, the women chairs were all clear that the lack of formal expectations, combined with never having enough time, influenced how much they felt they could invest in learning. Once a foundational understanding of the role's scope was established and the chairs gained confidence from learning more about systems and policies, opportunities to create change and see their impact began to emerge. Throughout this process, learning about themselves as leaders and how self-reflection played a role in their continued development was crucial to helping them understand their impact. While this section provided an overview of the different areas in which the chairs worked to develop capacity, the learning

process was not without challenges. The following section will examine some of the obstacles the chairs encountered throughout their first year.

Challenges to the Learning Process

The chairs not only had learning to do across the five issues discussed above, but they also had to navigate a set of challenges as they engaged in that essential learning process. As stated earlier, the chairs all knew that taking the chair role would entail a learning curve. No one came in with expectations that there would not be challenges; however, the types and sizes of some of the difficulties were not always predictable. The most prominent types of challenges encountered during the learning process were related to how they were appointed, navigating interpersonal situations, dealing with faculty expectations, understanding societal expectations, and trying to maintain a personal life and invest in self-care.

The Appointment Process

For half of the women, the challenges began at the time they were asked to serve as chair. Susan, Kira, June, and Suzanne were not actively seeking the chair role, and most of them were surprised and hesitant when asked about taking on the job. While some had more time than others to adapt to the idea, this was still discerned as a challenge in their career path. Susan felt pushed into the role, specifically since no women had previously served. Other women in her department who could have taken the role already had their service obligations maxed, so there was really no one else available. Susan did take advantage of the opportunity to negotiate a significant raise that remedied a long-standing salary equity issue, aligning her salary with those of her peers at a similar level.

Kira's situation was similar in that she belongs to a small department where everyone takes a turn as chair, and she knew it was only a matter of time before it was her turn. "I was

kind of dragged into it by the dean, who sort of said, you really need to do this. We think you would be very good." She accepted that she was the next in line for the role but was also finishing a manuscript, so she negotiated a mid-year start to accommodate her writing schedule.

Serving as program administrator and then associate chair, June thought she would spend a few more years in the associate chair role to solidify its portfolio and develop networks before applying for the chair position. June planned to consider applying for the chair role in seven years, so when the search committee chair approached her, she initially said no, adding a stipulation that they could return to her if they could not find anyone else. The only other person who showed interest in the role was not someone June wanted to work with, so when asked to apply for the role a second time, she did so more because the alternative seemed far worse.

In Suzanne's case, she was asked to immediately assume the chair role because the dean had lost confidence in the current chair and needed an "emergency chair." Suzanne had previously served as a chair in a different department, so the dean was aware of her experience; however, this was not her department or disciplinary home, and based on the circumstances, she knew it would be challenging. This request pulled Suzanne out of her sabbatical, so she needed to consider how this would take time away from her research. After numerous meetings with the dean, Suzanne decided to take on the role. However, she soon found out the department had no idea what was happening until they received an email announcing that their current chair was stepping down and Suzanne would be their new chair. Not being able to share that the previous chair had been asked to step down was a hurdle, especially since the faculty did not seem to know anything about the situation. The reasons for the chair stepping down were not Suzanne's to share; however, the removal of the chair by the dean created more stress in the department

because they already felt a "sense that the college is their enemy, and the college is trying to undermine them all the time and take things away from them."

Having served as a chair before, Suzanne brought a wealth of knowledge, yet overseeing a unit that is not her discipline and has a history of dysfunction, toxicity, and distrust added to the complexity. She acknowledged that the job "would have been extremely difficult for someone without experience to step into, and that was part of the problem for the previous chair." After a few months of Suzanne serving as chair, the department realized they did not have anyone prepared to step in as chair and requested the dean ask Suzanne to stay in the role so they could build leadership capacity in the faculty. Despite pulling Suzanne out of her sabbatical., she saw this was needed and committed to being chair for two years.

Some of the situations outlined here led to additional challenges, which are explored later in this section. Regardless of not initially wanting the role, once they became chair, these women were invested in the learning process and tackling the added complexities. Whether becoming chair was planned or more of a surprise, the one commonality all the women discussed was taking on the role as an act of service to the department and their colleagues, and they knew taking care of challenges was part of that obligation.

Interpersonal Relationships

"This job would be great if you didn't have to deal with people," June said, reflecting on the challenges she had encountered in her first year. Whether starting at a new institution or moving up within a department they have served in for years, stepping into this type of role changed several ways the chairs interacted with colleagues. The main themes they encountered were changing relationships, and dealing with conflict and delivering bad news.

Changing Relationships. Loneliness and isolation were frequently expressed feelings throughout the interviews. More than half of the chairs interviewed reported that the nature of their job significantly affects their ability to discuss job-related topics with others. The information they were now privy to is mostly confidential and does not allow for open discussion. Susan felt that 80% of her job could not be discussed because it involved personnel in the department. June mentioned receiving a warning that, as chair, she would become a receiving point for any issues in the department, which means learning things about colleagues she may wish she never knew. Ollie also shared how the melding of her colleagues' personal and work lives was an area she had expected, but did not realize how in-depth she would be dealing with situations around health and other issues not typically shared among colleagues.

For Susan, one of her biggest challenges was navigating how differently people treated her. While she did not feel any different, she would occasionally hear something that reminded her of how people's views of her had changed. Individuals who were considered friends were now keeping secrets. She had to develop a "poker face" for walking down the hall to mask when she might be dealing with a particularly troubling situation. Stepping into the role, Susan felt "more isolated, lonely. Like there's so many more burdens that you have to take on that you can't talk to with other people."

Suzanne came into her role with experience serving as a department chair a few years prior. Even with her previous experience, she had to make a conscious effort to remember that people were typically responding to her role as chair, rather than to who she was as a person.

> I (Suzanne) did a lot more work this semester to just know I'm in a role and it's not an interpersonal dynamic that has anything to do with me as a person. It wasn't about whether I was a good friend or whether I was a kind person, or whatever kinds of things

like that. It really is a role, and in the role different kinds of people are granted different degrees of authority from the beginning.

Working to separate herself from the role was a challenge during her first appointment as chair, but realizing that the anger and big emotions faculty confronted her with were not directed at her was a shift in thinking that helped her manage her feelings. This sentiment also came through in her illustration of the past year. Suzanne depicted flowers and butterflies coming from the foundation of her department, but the tornadoes were intermixed to show the chaos she felt in the role. She wanted to ensure "the totality of the good and the bad" was represented. The people she included in the drawing were chosen to represent the range of emotions of her colleagues: "Some are really happy, some are sort of medium, a couple are not that happy." At the bottom, she included "the department with me sort of asking, what else? Kind of like what else can I do? What else is there to do?"

Figure 8: Suzanne's reflective drawing

Another challenge was dealing with the expectations others have for how quickly the chair should deal with specific issues. Kira mentions that the department thinks serving as the chair is her only job, and the faculty in her department do not realize she still has her research

responsibilities. Related to this, June shared an experience of learning she cannot always move at the pace she feels is best when it comes to dealing with issues. Her unit was in the process of rethinking graduate student funding, and some graduate students were unhappy with the handling of the situation. The students emailed the department in February with a list of questions, but the responsible parties still had not responded four months later. In her role as chair, it was not June's responsibility to respond, as a committee was already working on the issue. However, she found herself in the "challenge of managing a timeline and keeping people to a timeline, but also acknowledging that, if I don't have to do the primary work, I also can't force a timeline on other people." June noted that in this situation, "Even if I thought I should be the one to answer, even if I wasn't worried about the importance of delegation and kind of letting people do their jobs, I wouldn't have the knowledge to fully answer it."

June found that she struggled more with balancing the competing interests constantly facing her and when to take action, especially when she has "a tendency to go it alone and to take things on myself and not hand them to other people". She shared the questions she often finds herself ruminating over:

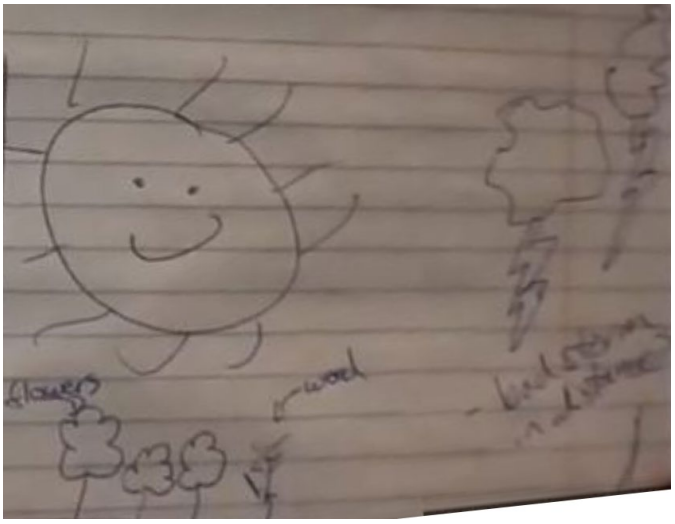
> When do you listen and ask questions, and when do you set the agenda? How do you keep those two things in relation? And how will you balance moving quickly on things that are important and taking the time necessary for deliberation? How are you going to balance the sort of constant day-to-day demands that is your email inbox with a longer-term vision and trying to get bigger picture things done?

She constantly considers these tensions as she works to balance her desire to move things forward quickly with her need to ensure everything is in place before acting. June commented on determining what others deem a priority versus what is actually urgent and how the role of the

chair sometimes involves navigating "problem management rather than the problem solution." Solutions were more manageable because she could work through the task at her own pace and try to solve it independently versus having to depend on others to collaborate on working through issues.

Pippin found it difficult when someone she previously thought of as a friend took advantage of that relationship when she became chair. For over a year, she made excuses for his behavior. As mentioned in the previous section, this eventually led to a confrontation at a faculty meeting, where he continued to press his issue, and he began yelling at her, prompting her to yell back. Pippin realized she should have addressed the situation in a one-on-one conversation and wrote a letter apologizing for how she had handled it. However, she also noted in the faculty members' review that they needed to discuss the importance of collegiality and respect. When sharing her drawing about her first year, this particular experience was reflected in her image.

Figure 9: Pippin's reflective drawing



Pippin referenced nature in her drawing, describing "flowers, and there's a sun, and it's mostly good. There's one weed, and there are storms out in the distance that are coming in to ruin everything." The storms on the horizon represented the conflict with a colleague that had been

bubbling up for some time, creating tension and frustration for Pippin. When asked about where she placed herself in the drawing, she saw herself as the sun shining down.

Coming in as an external hire, Clara faced the additional challenge of developing relationships with a new set of colleagues. Becoming acquainted with individuals and preexisting issues in the department cannot be taken lightly. While Susan was not new to her department, issues were brought to her attention as chair that had been building up over time and are now "coming to a head." Ollie had similar thoughts when long-term situations arose, and she started to question whether it was due to her being a woman, her personality, or some combination of those with it just being the time to deal with that specific issue.

Dealing with Conflict and Delivering Bad News. In their roles as managers, department chairs acknowledged the necessity of addressing issues such as underperformance, policy violations, and fostering an inclusive departmental environment. While particularly severe conflicts were indeed discussed by the women chairs, there was also an emphasis on navigating challenging conversations. Many of the women chairs expressed discomfort with addressing these issues and expressed a desire for training in conflict management and handling sensitive discussions.

Learning to balance when and how to push back against those who challenged the chair position was an area Clara found difficult, especially as she got to know people and was unsure how the relationship would evolve. Clara shared a situation where someone said something to her that she did not like, and she had to decide whether to say something or "let it roll off." She pushed back on the individual in this situation, somewhat surprising them, but she felt it was the right choice. Finding that balance to "maintain relationships, but not be walked over, or be taken advantage of" was important to Clara, especially since she was new to the institution. "It's a little

harder when you're not quite through a full year of the job, and you don't really know what the consequences might be of pushing back on some people or not."

There are also situations where the chair needs to be the one to disappoint someone with news that they do not want to hear. Suzanne had an assistant professor who was unlikely to attain tenure and was considering moving out of the tenure track. Despite two conversations with the faculty member that their record would not be tenurable, the individual ultimately decided to pursue tenure. That faculty member is now at a point where they cannot turn back, and Suzanne must help them navigate the next steps in finding a new career path. "That's like the interpersonal kind of stuff you just can't know. It's a really good example of how people have very different perspectives on stuff."

Some of the women chairs participated in a few workshops on conflict, which helped build their skills but did not address the lack of authority chairs have when dealing with tenured faculty members. Multiple chairs commented on their struggles with their colleagues, many of whom are older and male, who seem to follow their own rules and are not concerned with how their behaviors affect others. Having no recourse to hold people accountable was incredibly frustrating for Susan as she dealt with a senior male colleague mistreating graduate students.

> I'm a brand-new full professor and many of the people I have to work with are 20 years my senior and can't be fired. I'll be blunt, they're horrible. Trying to figure out how to navigate that has been the hardest part of my job.

In a meeting with HR, they essentially told Susan that the faculty member was untouchable. When Susan spoke with the dean, he agreed that there was nothing they could do because they needed a paper trail. Additional guidance on how to proceed was not provided to Susan at that point, which only increased her frustration.

Related to dealing with conflict is learning to hone communication skills for different situations. Ollie talked about how deciding when to send an email versus when to have an in-person conversation can have a significant impact on how messages are received:

> You have to think, does my contacting this person about this topic, since I am now the head, does this make it too big of a deal to contact them in such and such a way? Do I need to do it in a different way so that they understand that this is not huge? That it doesn't become outsized in their mind. Or if there is something that is a matter of concern, you have to think how do I address this? Is this a call? Is this an email? Is this please come into my office, or shall we meet for coffee? You have to judge it because you know that once you're head, that's the first thing they think of.

When sending emails, Pippin expressed that she continues to develop her skill of crafting messages to ensure nothing is misinterpreted. Suzanne also commented on a related skill that most people do not think about but need to exhibit in the communications and actions of a new chair, especially in their first year, and that is to provide stability. Amid transition, helping "everyone understand that things aren't going to fall apart" was something Suzanne did not see as a skill new chairs get trained in but is critical to keeping things moving forward.

Most of the chairs had not previously held roles that required them to manage conflict or be the one to disappoint someone, so they were simultaneously learning how to deal with new situations while navigating their emotional responses to tense situations. The expectations others have for chairs were also challenging to balance. Finding a way to separate the reactions people have to you as the chair from your personal identity was a crucial part of the learning process. Interpersonal situations were a top challenge for the women in this study, and some of what was shared as challenging was viewed through a lens relating to gender identity. The following

section explores how gender and other identity factors played a role for the women chairs and added further challenges.

Expectations from Society

While women are becoming more present in leadership roles, half of the chairs participating in this study were still the first women chairs in their department. While societal expectations for women serving in positions of power are starting to shift, gender-based stereotypes still create disparities for women leaders (Johnson, 2021) and pose another challenge for the women chairs in this study. The women who held additional marginalized identities faced additional difficulties. Some of these challenges were clearly related to gender, but at times, it was difficult for the women in this study to distinguish between the various factors affecting their experiences. As Ollie shared, so much is intangible:

> I don't know if they're (issues) coming to a head because of who I am in any way, whether as a woman or just my personality; I have no idea, but that is something that a person always thinks about. How much does it matter that I am this gender or this person? I mean, if you are a tall white guy named John Roberts, the world is open to you. You have your own set of problems, but advancement in the workplace probably isn't one of them. I think that's very accurate.

Some additional identities that participants identified, in addition to gender, are race, age, ability, and sexuality. These additional identity layers will be explored through the themes of intersectionality and isolation, sexism, and hidden labor.

Gender. While not all were initially labeled as challenges pertaining specifically to gender, there were several issues that, once they started to share, the women realized how gender was playing a role. As the first female chair in her department, Ollie had not yet achieved the

rank of full professor and was preparing her packet for promotion to submit during her first year while serving as chair. She will most likely be the first female full professor in her department, so there is forward movement for women, but still nowhere near gender parity. Ollie offered that women in the department seem to find it easier to talk to a woman chair. After she was named chair, a few female colleagues approached her, hoping she would be an advocate who would stand up for them.

Stepping into the role as the first woman department chair, Susan shared how her department thought there would be a shift in how men and women were treated, with the women expecting to now receive the preferential treatment men had previously enjoyed. When that did not happen the way people thought it would, there was "a tension between the way things used to work and the way things work now, and I'm the bad guy depending on who you talk to on whatever given day."

Clara felt that people are generally open to having women in leadership roles, and it especially helps to be at an institution with women in the provost and president roles. With that in mind, Clara shared that:

> There's still this sense that you have to be better than the men in order to get recognized. I don't know what the factor is; it could be twice as good, or five times as good, or whatever, but sometimes it's not possible. We have to just kind of sit in that and live with it, and not ruin your health and your mental state by trying to keep up with everything.

Suzanne remarked that she also sees movement beyond gender issues, but, in her experience, it is happening much more quickly in the humanities than in the natural sciences. When asked about the role of gender, Suzanne had the most distinct response with her "theory of jeans." In the 23 years she has served as a faculty member, she has never worn blue jeans to work. Many

faculty members around her, primarily men, wore jeans to various events; however, she consciously decided to occupy a particular role by focusing on this one piece of her wardrobe. Kira also shared a pattern she has identified more with her male colleagues, who tend to take on something only if they see it as an advantage for themselves, versus women who seem to take it on just to ensure it gets done. "Don't take on anything that you don't think your male colleagues would be willing to take on. Sometimes women do that; they just go, well, it must be part of the job."

Intersectionality and Isolation. Another societal issue that confronts the chairs are pressures connected with intersectionality. As the first woman of color chair of her department and one of the very few women of color administrators on her campus, Jane felt that there were few efforts to connect women of color leaders and find pathways to continue their advancement. "It just feels like I'm on a big isolating island. There are no boats available for me to even paddle somewhere else to another island. Yeah, there's no boats, there's no bridge, there's nothing. I'm just there."

Another challenge that arose was learning to deal with individuals who question their authority, particularly in relation to gender and age. Suzanne said, "I think people kind of assume that a male-identified person, especially a straight or white one, will already have a kind of authority. Like, they grant that authority faster than they do for someone younger, or someone just coming in." Susan shared a similar experience with some of her older faculty: "I think they don't take me seriously as a young 50-something woman. I think that even if they did, they don't care because they came of age in a different climate." When Susan discussed this with the previous male chair, he acknowledged he did not experience the same blatant disrespect, which reinforces her belief that this is due to her being younger and a woman.

There also seemed to be a distinction of who could turn down the chair role. When Jane spoke with her predecessor, they commented, "Why does it always have to be a black woman who carries the burden and takes on things and sacrifices." Jane is still proud of taking on the role, but it does create extra layers, being one of a limited number of women of color in leadership positions. Susan did not experience this to the same extent but did share that within her department, there were limited individuals who could step into the chair role, and most were already at capacity with their service obligations. There were a few other full professors, but "you would never want (them) to do the job because they would be horrible". Even though Susan mentioned that the chair role "is going to kill my career in the long run," she did not feel she could have turned it down because the department needed someone competent.

Finding ways to connect to a peer group has been significant for the women chairs, specifically as it pertains to their identity. Clara is the only women chair in her college, which, as she stated, "created some quirky dynamics." Clara's university offers a monthly coffee hour for women chairs, but she had trouble finding time to attend the past year. She noted that she plans to make a more concerted effort to participate in the coming year. Susan shared her need to find support outside her institution, as she found it difficult to know who to trust internally. She found colleagues at her discipline's national conference who were also in chair roles and came together as a support group. There was a sense of relief in commiserating with a trusted group who did not know of or have connections to the colleagues in their departments. Jane also started to connect with other minority chairs at conferences. They had known each other before becoming chairs and decided to start checking in with each other once they assumed their roles. Another conference Jane is considering as a way to continue building her community of support is the Black Women and Academic Leadership Research Collective.

Sexism. Flagrant or implicit sexism entered the discussions in various ways. Pippin had been under the impression that things were not that bad in her department until she stepped into the chair role and was shocked to see how unequal the situation was. Men in her department had better teaching loads and more teaching assistants. There was also a "good old boy" network, which still did favors for one another and initially tried to work around this by going to the previous male chair to make deals instead of coming to Pippin.

Being one of the few women chairs in her college, Clara encountered a couple of male chairs who wanted to make it known they were not sexist, and they thought it was great she was in the role:

> They talk about it like they want to be on record that this is fine with them. It's not like they're treating me differently in terms of not listening to me or inviting me to things. It's just making these overt comments that should not be necessary to say if that's the case.

While Clara was not sure quite how to take the comments, it was better than dealing with the sexist bullying that Susan experienced. For a period, she was receiving sexist emails, which have since stopped, but the person still makes snide remarks under his breath during meetings. Susan also notes that the person doing this also "counseled me not to be department head because my children would miss me. I was like, I'm sure you said the same thing to (the previous male chair) who has three kids all the same age as mine." Ollie also has dealt with a male bully in the form of a fellow department chair. While the person openly bullies many people, Ollie had a few conversations with this individual where they "brought up my husband, or the faculty in my department, slandering them in particular ways, and being extremely dismissive, it's been sexist, certainly, as well as just generally dismissive."

Hidden Work. While women are becoming more present in leadership, it is notable that half of the women participating in this study were the first women in their department to serve as chair. Ollie, Suzanne, and June all deliberated about how difficult it is for them to assess how much of their success or failure is connected to being a woman in the role versus their personality, age, race, or the intersection of these factors. For the women who also held an additional minoritized identity, they were more likely to be the only one, or one of very few, representing their intersection of race, age, or ability and found themselves dealing with additional "hidden work" they were not initially expecting.

Any chair must do a multitude of work behind the scenes to ensure the job gets done. In Suzanne's experience, she noted that people tend to give authority faster to white, straight males. Those who fall outside of that category must work harder to build trust. For those who identify with traditionally underrepresented groups, additional work related to identity factors such as gender, race, ability, and age seemingly adds to their already full plates. Jane references colleagues who have called the department chair role "the most thankless job out of any leadership role at the university." "Middle-level leadership is…you do a lot. And I don't think people really realize how much you do. That's the problem with middle-level leadership; there's a lot of hidden labor." Jane references the "behind-the-scenes politicking" as something in which many do not realize chairs are involved because they are middle managers with limited power. Although, despite that feeling, Jane still feels the need to constantly be engaged in and involved in the politics because it is important to protecting her department.

In the discussions with the women chairs, numerous examples showed where extra time was spent. Walking into a room and not seeing other women of color, or even other women in general., can be a shock. Clara and June commented on how different it felt walking into the

room with department chairs from across campus and noticing that they were the only woman, or one of only a few women, serving in a chair role. Clara shared how she felt she needed to prepare differently for these types of meetings. As the only female chair in her college, she is sometimes the only woman in the room. "You have to prepare for it and think about it really carefully, anticipate a little bit, and have some responses ready or have a few things kind of sorted out ahead of time."

Kira shared how her visual impairment exposed processes that were not easily accessible for her to complete. Something as simple as filling out a survey becomes complex when the form is not accessible. Kira must make the extra effort to write back to the person who sent the survey and explain why there is an issue. "I have to do all this hidden work just to make what should be very basic processes work for me. That, I think, is why I wouldn't really consider an extra term (as chair), because that work is just so exhausting." While she was able to negotiate for a student to help with some of the workload, such as making documents accessible for her to use a screen reader, certain aspects require confidentiality, which a student cannot be involved in.

Advocating for what she needs to fulfill the responsibilities of the role is yet another part of Kira's job that she deals with daily. "That's still an ongoing battle and I think the further you go into administration, the more of this kind of stuff you get, and the more inventive I have to be to process it efficiently." Even as she submitted her materials for promotion to full professor, she felt compelled to do more. There was a "kind of hinting like, well, because you have a disability, you have to be better than everybody else." While not entirely limited to her experience navigating the chair role with a visual impairment, Kira's description conveys the idea of constantly feeling like she needed to be doing multiple things at once. Kira was not able to provide a drawing; however, her description of her first year was extremely illustrative. She

shared the image of herself with “bungee cords attached to pretty much every part of my body being pulled in all sorts of different directions and new ones being attached all the time.” At the end of the bungee cords were different people with differing levels of “urgent requirements.” “Sometimes there are two things pulling in opposite directions, and sometimes they're all pulling. This is sort of a continual dynamic unfolding of being pulled all over the place.”

As one of the few women of color chairs at her institution, Jane feels exhausted from being repeatedly asked to speak up about racial issues and not seeing actions that back up the rhetoric from the institution. After a particular incident, Jane noted that she would not post another statement without seeing action to back it up. To "be a leader of color at an ultra PWI is incredibly exhausting... after I had that moment and I said my piece, I thought I was going to literally pass out. I was just so physically exhausted." Jane also shared that being the woman of color chair created "a little bit of anxiety and a little bit of imposter syndrome as a result. I don't think anyone treated me differently. I was just hyper-aware of the fact that I am the only woman of color department chair." There are not many leaders of color on her campus, and with even fewer women of color in leadership, there is a desire to find connections to help talk through how to navigate these situations. Jane also noted that the number of students coming to meet with her in her first semester was surprising. She did preface that she was unsure if this was because she was a woman of color or because she initially focused heavily on student outreach. However, it was a significant amount of time that was not expected.

The last aspect that led to additional work came from those creating issues for the women who were younger than most, if not all, chairs before them. June and Susan both shared that age has impacted them in their roles, with June specifically feeling that people were more open with telling her what to do rather than asking her what should be done. For Susan, three

older male faculty in the department constantly created issues for her that she did not face from her junior colleagues. Since they are all tenured, they believe they are untouchable, and Susan is left to deal with individuals who did not behave in this manner under the previous, older male chair.

Emotional Labor. Suzanne and June both discussed how emotional labor can be more taxing on women. While not exclusive to their male counterparts, they observed that women paid more attention to aspects of the job that emphasized culture and emotional intelligence. Jane felt there is a sense that women chairs are often seen as more of a caregiver than their male predecessors or counterparts.

> I sometimes wonder if the job is bigger and harder for folks who occupy the more feminized end of things, whether that's gender or sexuality or even certain cultural backgrounds or racial identities. If it's harder because of a greater sense of responsibility to the people and the emotional labor and the shepherding, the pastoral part of the job, and if it's easier for those people who occupy masculine positions who don't think about or don't dwell on that piece of it.

Some faculty members did seem to test Jane's caring nature, as Jane feels she has been asked for things that she might not have been if someone was male and white. Jane shared a particular situation in which a female faculty member requested reimbursement for her travel, despite already having exhausted her own travel funds. The faculty thought there might be funds that someone else had not used, which could cover her bill, but did not bother to check before traveling. She thought Jane would just take care of the reimbursement, but Jane had to tell her no. It was hard for Jane to know precisely why the person expected they would be covered, but it felt like they would not have tried this under the previous male chair. Jane knows she is

ultimately responsible for the department's financial health and cannot worry about making everyone happy.

Jane's commitment to the department became extremely clear when she drew an image representing her first year. After spending only two years at her institution, most of which was remote due to the pandemic, she felt that her head was "just exploding trying to learn how to be a chair, but also trying to learn the institution." Despite dealing with the intense learning curve, she drew her body with the letters representing her department's acronym (blurred to help protect anonymity).

Figure 10: Jane's reflective drawing

> Literally, my entire body is (the departmental acronym). I don't know if it's healthy that I'm always thinking about the department and what needs to be done and changed, but again, it's like the principal., the superintendent. People see you in that figurehead position when you're out and about. They want to ask you questions. It just never leaves you, and I care, I really care. I'm not just doing the job because I was who was next in line, most senior. I actually do care about doing a good job, and I care about the success

of my colleagues, and I care about the success of the students. So there's also a positive aspect to this embodiment.

June shared earlier that she presents as a "butch lesbian," and her more masculine appearance may have helped others' perceptions of her in the role. While externally, June may have had an easier transition into the role, she still expressed how gender has complicated her transition into the chair role:

> I know for sure that the things that I value and things I focus on, the things that I'm stressed by are gendered. It would be an easier transition if I didn't feel a responsibility to people's emotional well-being. Even though I don't think that that's a woman thing, it is a gendered thing in our society. If I didn't worry about that, if I didn't worry about how I was coming across, if I wasn't wanting to balance holding my authority and being a collaborative leader in a way that I think is particularly gendered, I think it would be different. And I think I'd be less good at the job. The things that are gendered that I am anxious about are things that actually do need to happen, and the department will be less well off if people don't pay attention to emotions and power and the feelings in the room, but I do know it's gendered.

The experiences the women shared demonstrate that the role of gender has been a significant factor for all the women in this study. It is also important to acknowledge that expectations others cast upon the chair role are done so through their own biases and lived experiences. Navigating the implications of how those expectations play out for each woman is not insignificant and will always be changing based on the mix of people they interact with. While it is challenging to pinpoint exactly which identity factors most significantly impacted

their transition, learning about who they are and how they present themselves as leaders was a critical reflection point for all the women chairs.

Personal Life and Self-Care

The last section pertaining to challenges focused on taking care of themselves and their families and not losing sight of who they were outside of being the chair. Almost all the women described taking on the department chair role as exhausting, and finding time for life outside of work proved to be a struggle. Susan feels that she has lost her weekends because they are now used for catching up on work. Ollie had the reverse experience, feeling that while she is more aware of weekends, she finds them more relaxing:

> I finally realized what weekends were for. I mean, when you're just researching, you don't care how many emails you do over the weekend because you just don't have too many, and you don't mind. But as an administrator, I'm thoughtful about not bothering staff on the weekend, and of course, they don't send in any emails. And so, weekends really become weekends, and that's restful.

Ollie also acknowledged how the stress has changed from focusing on research where there was more control over the workflow. Now, she feels the administrative stress is continuous, with a never-ending influx of emails. Ollie realized there was a problem with the time spent on email when she developed a health issue from sitting for so long in one position in front of the computer. Her research required her to sit, but she would often get up to take breaks. The workflow changed after becoming chair, and she found herself "absorbed in emails" and “you just stay (sitting) because they keep coming in."

With or without a significant other or children, the role can quickly overtake life outside of work. Jane, Susan, Clara, and Suzanne did not initially realize how much the job was taking

over their lives and affecting their overall well-being. Clara emphasized the need to "force self-care" because "the job could swallow one and a half times your entire life if you let it." She found herself waking up at 2:30 a.m. to get ahead and started to rely on alcohol in the evenings to unwind. Susan also shared that she had an "extra glass of wine in the evenings," and her diet was not the greatest. When Suzanne first became a chair, there was a feeling that she needed to work harder to prove herself. For her, it seemed like women, and those in other minoritized positions, take even longer to prove they can do the job and are less likely to set needed boundaries. After a year on the job, boundary setting has become one of Susan's top priorities in order to regain control. "It's very hard for me to put the job down, and I need to figure out better ways to do that. I need to learn to turn email off. I need to learn that people don't need to hear from me in 24 hours." Susan and Clara discussed the need to compartmentalize and prioritize to help with the feeling that she should constantly be working on something else. Coming to understand that things are not as urgent as they seem was a key realization for Clara. "You can't be constantly thinking I should be doing something else when you really just have to do this job right because the consequences are steeper than (when you are) a faculty member."

The focus on health and exercise either became a priority or was forgotten or easily removed from the schedule during their first year. Susan and Jane noted that they set aside their health and felt the effects by gaining a few pounds and holding in more stress. Jane commented that she could feel the lack of attention she gave to her physical well-being and that she had already enrolled in an exercise class for the coming year. Kira knew it would be hard to maintain a regular exercise schedule, so she invested in personal training appointments, which were set as a priority appointment on her calendar. She knew she was less likely to overbook since she was paying for that time. As soon as June accepted the chair role, she envisioned it could go two

different ways, and to help ensure she had the time to work out, which she knows is a de-stressor for her, she purchased a watch to help keep her accountable to exercise. "I am pleasantly surprised that I was able to maintain, with very few exceptions, at least four hour-long workouts every week throughout the year." Susan and Ollie also echoed this by sharing how important walking is to their well-being. Ollie has a newer puppy, which comes with its own stressors but allows her to get out and walk regularly. On morning walks, they often talk to neighbors or go to a coffee shop and sit for a few minutes before heading home and going to work.

The practice or desire for self-care was a clear need throughout the interviews. Pippin shared that listening to podcasts is how she decompresses, and Suzanne still tries to read for pleasure. Drinking alcohol at the end of the day was mentioned by Clara and Susan. They both acknowledged it was not the healthiest habit, but it helped them unwind from extremely exhausting days. For Clara, carving out time to travel for pleasure was a way to feel refreshed, even if she did not completely disconnect from work while traveling. Answering emails was limited to about an hour each day while she was away, and while it was work, she found that being in a different place brought a new perspective and took away some of the urgency. Finally, Suzanne underscored the importance of having a good therapist as an outlet for managing the layers of stress.

The women chairs who had children shared the complexities of trying to be both a parent and a wife while navigating their new role. Creating the space to be actively involved in parenting was an important part of their identity. To maintain life outside of work, Susan, Pippin, and June all shared the need to attend their children's activities and drive them to practices. Susan discussed the guilt of balancing work and personal life, which became more apparent when she mentioned running out to pick up her daughter from volleyball practice in the summer after

working for "only six hours." Leaving at 4:00 p.m., she was worried about what work she would have to do that evening. Susan also has a son who is beginning to explore colleges, and she worries that she might not have the time to accompany him on college visits. Pippin has always put her family at a high level, which she recognizes sacrificed her ability to become a more acclaimed scientist. She had the support to do what she needed to reach this point in her career and does not regret any of her choices. Pippin continues to maintain boundaries serving as department chair and feels it is working.

While Kira and Jane do not have children, they did note that it was just as essential to hold time for themselves and their families. For Jane, this is time she uses to recharge:

> Being department chair all day long, you feel like people are constantly wanting to talk to you, pulling little pieces of you away, and on the weekends, I just don't want to do anything. I just want to be home by myself. My mother complains, like you don't call. It's not intentional. I'm not trying to ignore you. It's just I'm tired, and I don't want to talk to anybody.

Kira found it important to reserve her weekends for time with her partner. "So that I do have time to spend with him. So that I'm not pushing him out of my life as well. I think I've tried really hard to do that, even though at some point it's been kind of stressful because I should be working."

Clara had one of the more complex personal situations, moving to a new place with a partner who also works in the same department. While she was excelling and quickly began to integrate with the institution, her partner had yet to establish his connections. He was highly supportive of her, but Clara struggled to balance her feelings with her partner's, who did not feel the same sense of belonging. It was a role reversal from the previous institution, where Clara had

felt unhappy and isolated, and he had his connections and collaborators. "It's easier to go from a low place to a high place than go from a high place to a low place, especially at this point in your career." Clara hoped the new institution would be an excellent place for both of them, but it has been more challenging than she imagined.

In addition to needing to learn how to perform the role, the added complexity of navigating it while belonging to one or more traditionally underrepresented identities further increased the learning curve. Some of the women chairs were more attuned to this than others, but they were all committed to working through the challenges to support the department's success. The next section will demonstrate how the chairs navigated the challenges of the role, both in terms of leveraging the available resources and what they did to enhance their own learning process.

Support for the Learning Process

When taking on a new role, no matter previous experiences or preparations, some type of support will always be needed. Acclimating to a new role is not the same for everyone, and not everyone may need the same kinds of help at the same time. However, the chairs shared several types of support that were important in helping them make it through their first year. These areas of support began with the appointment process, built on previous experiences of the women, examined institutional support structures, involved developing a new community of colleagues, and explored the affirmations and encouragement they received.

The Appointment Process

Pippin, Clara, Jane, and Ollie were the four chairs who sought out the role and had more time to think about this next stage and the potential impact the job could have on their lives. Pippin was serving in a leadership role within her department, so when the chair role was

announced, she saw it as a natural progression. As the graduate studies director for the department, Pippin already dedicated a significant amount of time to helping the department and "felt like (the chair role) was the next thing." Pippin shared that she "cared a lot about the group" and heard from her colleagues that they supported her as the next chair. She viewed moving into the chair role as a way to help the department move forward, especially knowing there was consensus for her appointment. Already holding a position in the department provided her with knowledge about most of the issues the current chair was dealing with. Knowing that there was currently no major controversy gave her peace of mind moving into the role.

Clara's experience in administration with her national association prompted others to approach her with open chair positions, as they recognized her leadership strengths and believed she would excel in the role. She also did not want to rely solely on research for career advancement, so she sought a position aligning with a different set of passions and skills. Participating in an extensive search process allowed her the opportunity to listen to what different stakeholders wanted in the new chair and how they thought it could be achieved. When it came time to negotiate for the role, Clara relied on what she had heard and used that as a basis for ensuring she had what she needed to help the department move forward.

In a previous conversation, Jane mentioned to her dean that she had a budding interest in leadership, so when the chair position became available, the dean encouraged her to apply as a way to continue her growth. Other institutions began recruiting Jane for leadership positions, as they also recognized her leadership potential. Department tradition follows that the next longest-serving person would take on the role. However, there was not much interest from others, so Jane decided to step up despite only being in the department a short time: "I was actually kind of

surprised that my colleagues trusted me to take on the role, considering I was still fairly new faculty, and they were still getting to know me."

During the last chair search, Ollie applied for the position, but a more senior colleague received the role. This time, she "wasn't gung-ho about being the head," although she was still interested in exploring the role. Ollie also engaged in a very thorough search process meeting with students, staff, and faculty. Hearing about what they expected from a chair provided Ollie with a perspective that helped her start to prepare for the role. When it became time to assume the role, she had a framework she could reference to help her navigate expectations.

Building on Previous Experiences

A few of the chairs mentioned prior experiences that provided them with critical skills they could rely on in the role. Knowing they had these experiences to lean on also gave them a stronger feeling of self-efficacy. Some, like Pippin, were related directly to holding a previous administrative position in the department for several years, which gave her an understanding of the department and gave her confidence as she moved to the chair role because she felt she knew what to expect. Others, like Clara and Jane, found experiences related to their research and other external opportunities helpful in mollifying their expectations for themselves in the role.

A few years earlier in her career, Clara experienced a period of uncertainty in both her personal and professional life. She met with a coach who encouraged her to look beyond her institution for opportunities to develop leadership skills. The guidance she received led Clara to become actively involved in her professional organization, where she assumed various leadership roles. This experience helped her develop skills while also assisting her in realizing that she could contribute to the scientific community in ways beyond her research. She developed an

aptitude for administration, and her abilities were recognized by her colleagues, eventually leading her to apply for her current chair role.

Clara also provided insight into how she was able to apply disciplinary research skills to the role. The presentation she made to the chair selection committee was about translating her research and "applying it to a position like a chair where it's about maintaining multiple strategies within a department to make the whole function better." Clara began her role at the same time evaluations were underway and quickly discovered that the non-tenure-track faculty had been largely overlooked over the past few years. As a result, they were all seeking raises and promotions. Clara agreed that they deserved to be rewarded, but the university system was not nimble, and she knew it would take time to work through all the details. Clara utilized her research skills to conduct her own numerical analysis of salaries and identified three individuals who were significantly underpaid. It took a few conversations with the college budget office to convince them that something needed to be done. Despite being told it could not be done, Clara persisted with her research, and the data she provided made a strong argument that eventually led to the faculty members' raises and attention to addressing pay equity for others in similar situations.

Jane also drew on her disciplinary background to inform some of her leadership approaches. Her scholarship in leadership and organizational change enabled her to identify areas where cultural shifts were occurring within her department. As a result, she was able to easily track when there was more engagement in the department. Her work also helped temper any expectations she has for rapid change, as she knows that many of her goals for the department will take years to take root. Her experiences as a special education teacher also enabled her to work effectively with diverse groups of faculty, staff, and students. Learning to be

a behaviorist involves developing the skill of observing others' behaviors and creating effective intervention strategies. These skills have proven especially helpful in dealing with interpersonal issues, as well as navigating the increase in individuals dealing with mental health issues.

Institutional Support Structures

The chairs in this study represented five universities of similar scale and scope. Each institution offered differing types of orientations, workshops, and resources; however, the chairs felt some were more helpful than others. The types of support fell into three categories: central university resources, support from the dean's office, and connection to their predecessor.

University Resources. Four chairs attended a university-level orientation, and Ollie and June thought it helped them become acquainted with their job and the institution. However, the conversations around expectations were at a much broader level. June referenced the orientation held by the provost's office, which did not detail tasks but clarified that the department chair has a "pastoral role" and is responsible for guiding climate and culture. Jane had a previous engagement that precluded her from attending her university's chair orientation, but she did not feel she missed out on much. Once she saw the orientation agenda, Jane shared that she did not want to hear panels of people just talking about their experiences; instead, she wanted to hear about specifics, like managing the budget.

Throughout their first year, Susan and Jane attended additional university offerings when they could. While they both appreciated the efforts of the provost's office in organizing the events, they did not always feel that the time was well spent. June also related to these comments regarding the workshops offered by her institution. She thought that most of the discussions focused on the task or policy, and she wanted more hands-on training in managing people and working with budgets. Clara's institution offered several scheduled opportunities to connect and

discuss issues with other chairs, and when she attended, she found them helpful. Finding the time to attend was the most challenging part for Clara, and Kira and Jane also mentioned that they had not yet found the time to participate in various events. While the institution may organize them, many chairs did not feel encouraged to prioritize and attend professional development. As a chair, Jane had funds specifically for her professional development. However, there are no real restrictions on how to use that money, and she could attend a research conference since no one seems to track what is happening with that money.

Deans' Office Support. While mentioned earlier that the chairs did not receive specific expectations from the dean, Clara, Susan, Ollie, and Suzanne mentioned how important it was to have access to either their dean or an associate dean in the college to contact with questions. Ollie shared how a newer associate dean had put together a series of workshops for all the chairs in their college and was always willing to work through issues as they arose. Pippin also appreciated a series of leadership workshops her college offered that addressed issues around bullying and negotiation, in addition to sessions on "how to fill out this form." Kira and Suzanne referenced the regularly scheduled college-level chair meetings, which offered relevant information and allowed them to raise issues and get to know others in similar roles.

Developing new relationships with the dean and associate deans in the college is also crucial. Ollie found knowing how and when to approach the dean essential to working through issues and advocating for the department. Susan shared how much she valued a new relationship with an associate dean from the college who could help when she needed someone to talk to about challenging issues. Suzanne, Kira, and Jane also mentioned how helpful the associate deans, particularly those in faculty affairs type of roles, are when dealing with sensitive issues and have benefited from the informal mentoring that occurs.

Another way the dean's office was supportive was through the negotiations for different types of help they were willing to provide to new chairs. Clara and Susan took the opportunity to negotiate for additional help, either related to their individual research or departmental support. Susan obtained a postdoc, but almost a year into her role, she still had not found the time to hire someone. Kira's negotiations were tied to her visual impairment. While she did receive some assistance from a student, she hoped for additional help with more challenging tasks "that in theory was promised, but in practice, it didn't really turn out." Her colleagues have stepped in to help with some of that work, but she wanted to revisit her request for assistance with the dean's office. Part of Clara's negotiations were to rebuild the department's administrative support since it had been depleted over the past few years. During the interview process, it became clear that administrative assistance was needed to "help get things back on track," so she requested funding to hire new staff. She also negotiated for separate funds to be allocated explicitly for community building, as this was a fundamental expectation the department had for hiring her.

Connection to Predecessor. Relationships with the previous chair frequently arose for Susan, Pippin, and Ollie as a crucial part of their onboarding. Once Susan was named as the new incoming chair, the outgoing chair started to include her on emails and invite her to meetings to help ease the transition. For the last few months of the semester, Susan gained a jump start on learning the job by getting a first-hand look at ongoing initiatives and issues. The departing chair took it upon himself to initiate the transition process before Susan's start date, allowing her to shadow and ask questions. He even created a 20-page binder outlining the department, including the number of faculty and staff, their respective roles and responsibilities within the office, and a general overview of expectations for the role. Susan did acknowledge that her predecessor thought she would have a more challenging time in the role being the first woman. However, his

thoughtfulness to the transition process came more from his horrible transition and not wanting the next person to have the same experience.

Pippin had the previous chair residing in the next-door office, and he had been accessible to answer questions as they arose. Her predecessor has been open to working with her, and Pippin mentions visiting him several times a week. Ollie also interacted with her former chair a few times and found the conversations extremely helpful. As Ollie summarized, "They seem to be the only person who understands exactly the situation, and because some of the issues are ongoing, they already know everything."

The benefits of having access to the departmental knowledge of a predecessor are helpful; however, the change in leadership brought with it the weight of the previous chair's actions (or inactions). Pippin shared that her former chair was not known for telling anyone "no," and in some ways, she is perceived as mean because she does not say yes to everything. This same chair was also known to have a “good old boys' network," which created some friction when she discovered that people were still going around her to try to make deals with the previous chair instead of coming to her to discuss the situation.

Community Building

The chair role presented challenges in terms of shifting relationships and isolation; however, it also provided opportunities to cultivate new relationships and forge collaborations. While the chair role can create a sense of loneliness, the new job responsibilities require different types of connections to help them learn and manage the role. Six of the eight women interviewed highlighted the importance of expanding or redefining their community during their first year.

Suzanne shared that the first time she was chair, she was intentional about developing new relationships and finding colleagues who could be sounding boards for working through the

new types of issues associated with being chair. This time, she has her established networks to rely on and reach out in a "semi-confidential way." Pippin reflected that having someone responsive is crucial for addressing time-sensitive issues. If she must rely on scheduling a meeting or even waiting for a workshop to cover a topic, it might be too late to rectify a volatile situation. Kira has a few female colleagues she has found helpful when needing advice, particularly regarding clarifying best practices within the college. June mentioned a desire to develop more consistent conversation partners to address some of the complexities of the role; however, she has yet to establish those connections. Being new to the institution and not having any previous connections, Clara initiated a monthly lunch group with other department chairs to expand her network. They have been able to work through some questions, but there is no "clicking going on." She was hoping this would provide a good foundation for a collegial relationship, but the connections do not seem to be developing:

> People in my own field, in my own college, it's like I'm trying to meet with them, and just establish good relationships, and it's been really hard. It just feels very formal here, and I guess unfriendly is the wrong word, but it just feels like you just don't do that; you don't have friends.

The other type of relationship building is establishing connections with faculty and setting the groundwork for what is expected from them. It was necessary to redefine who they were as chairs, especially for those who had become chairs of the departments they had previously served as faculty members. Jane shared how she created opportunities for faculty to get to know each other, especially those new to the institution, by hosting happy hours or attending campus events. It is a helpful way for the new faculty to become more integrated with the department and campus community while also being valuable to the chair. Her efforts

seemed to be effective, as Jane felt that most of the faculty in her department seemed "comfortable coming to her with their issues and concerns". June reflected that being a chair is about learning to gather people together to solve complex problems, where there may be a variety of positions and options to consider. Chairs cannot— and should not —be solving these problems independently. They should understand who they can ask to help create the solution, ensuring shared ownership of the decision. This includes faculty in the department as well as colleagues from across the college or institution.

For Jane, she developed new collaborations with students regarding mental health and developing community. This new initiative led to students from other departments noticing and commenting on the positive culture within the department. As mentioned earlier, Clara worked to rebuild a culture that had been severely impacted by COVID-19 and previous turnover in the chair role. Investing her time in developing connections with people made them feel seen, and it started to build networks across the labs and even departments in the college.

Finding a community outside of academia was also vital for these women. While tending to the responsibilities of the chair role, having supportive partners, spouses, friends, and parents to help with other aspects of life was a clear need. Pippin's parents moved to her town a few years ago and were able to offset some of the parenting workload. When June decided to take on the role, it was seven years earlier than she had expected, and she had younger children whom her partner and she had equally parented. Together, June and her partner decided that June's partner would reduce her work time and take on more day-to-day responsibilities, but they would both maintain emotional parenting. Susan also mentioned that her spouse has been particularly helpful, and she has had a great parenting group to rely on, in addition to excellent mentors who have supported her throughout her career. As a first-generation college student, Jane found her

mentors instrumental to her development, as she did not have anyone in her family who could provide a "blueprint" for navigating academia, let alone becoming an academic leader.

Affirmations and Encouragement

Feeling supported goes beyond having opportunities to attend workshops or talk to people when there are issues. While the chairs mostly commented that any type of feedback or praise was rare, when they did hear from the dean or other colleagues that they were doing a good job, it was a type of indirect support that provided many of the chairs with confirmation that they were making an impact in their new role. In addition to receiving encouragement, a common theme that many of the participants discussed can be summarized as developing a culture of appreciation within their units. Jane also took time to embrace reaching this point in her career. Outside of her mentors, she did not have examples of her family navigating higher education. As a first-generation college student, she took a chance and is proud of having made it this far, continuing to learn and grow.

Jane, Kira, Clara, and June mentioned that being the ones to receive positive feedback from the dean or the faculty and staff in the department made them feel they were having an impact. Kira shared how she felt good after receiving feedback from her dean about the positive direction of the department and even acknowledged that more resources are needed to help grow the department. She also noted that a faculty member had told her early on that the quality of her work was being noticed. This meant a great deal to Kira, as she had received little feedback prior to that point. June additionally noted that she received primarily positive feedback from faculty and academic staff, who all seemed relatively happy with how she managed the role. For Jane, a long-term faculty member and former administrator complimented her on how fast she was

figuring out the job, and other faculty members told her they felt like they had a voice and were being heard.

Perhaps the most surprising feedback Jane received was when her dean told her she was doing an outstanding job. A previous interaction caused Jane some uncertainty about the dean's feelings. However, the one small, unexpected statement made her feel more confident about her work and showed that the dean was invested in her success. Jane's dean also knew she was interested in leadership when she came into the role, and nominating her to participate in a prestigious leadership development program was a sign of confidence that Jane valued. Another sign of encouragement Jane received was from the chair of another department in her college. Jane worked to develop new collaborations with students on mental health and community development. As a result, students from other departments noticed and commented to their chair about the strong sense of positivity they felt when interacting with colleagues from Jane's department.

Clara's hands-on approach to rebuilding community in the department has faculty providing feedback on how happy they are with the progress. Clara worked to rebuild a culture that had been decimated due to COVID-19 and previous turnover in the chair role. Investing her time in developing connections with people made them feel seen, and she began building networks across the labs and various departments within the college. When speaking with other departments with which she shares faculty, the chairs of those units noticed her effort to engage with everyone. One director noted that the "relationship between our units was better than it's ever been." Job candidates from other institutions have even explicitly commented on the positive dynamics in the department and the welcoming interactions they experienced with the other faculty members.

Coming into a highly volatile department, Suzanne had the most challenging situation, working on communications to increase collaboration and transparency within the department. "There's a lot of infrastructure improvement in terms of the staffing, and over the course of this semester, I did see more signs that the seeds are sprouting." Faculty are noticing the change and commenting on the positive spark in the department. She heard faculty say, "I really appreciate it, and you're doing a good job." The department can now have conversations that lead to better outcomes, helping them move forward together; those are the "moments of joy and spark."

Being the one to deliver good news to faculty about promotions and tenure decisions is a more pronounced part of the job, representing a formal way of rewarding individuals. Multiple chairs discussed their joy in relaying these important milestones to their faculty. Jane, Pippin, and June also mentioned the positivity surrounding the ability to nominate faculty for awards and recognize their colleagues for various aspects of their work, both internal and external to their institution.

For Clara and Susan, finding a way to negotiate for pay or other benefits for employees was another way to recognize critical positions within the unit. The earlier example of Clara using her research skills to make a case for her non-tenure-track faculty, whose salaries were well below average, showed her commitment to equity. Susan was unable to negotiate raises for her staff but was able to secure an increase in travel funds. She hopes that even though it is not salary dollars, people will still feel appreciated.

Another way Clara worked to show she values her colleagues is by walking down the hall, saying hello to people using their names, and asking them questions about their work. "I think it's probably going to pay off in terms of units working together better, more collaborative stuff, more sharing of initiatives and things like that." Taking the time to slow down and connect

with people helps make them feel seen, and Clara receives feedback that what she is doing is important. Jane takes the idea of knowing about the work of her faculty even further by intentionally developing a social media presence for the department that helps bring attention to the work faculty and students are doing. Hiring a doctoral student to manage the department's social media and communications created a new energy. Communications will continue to grow as the department develops its first-ever external newsletter to share the wonderful accomplishments of students and faculty.

Investment in Self

Reflection on one's abilities was a strong positive for many of the women and acknowledging when they needed help was not always as easy as they would have liked. A common obstacle was the desire to have more time to prepare and plan. Jane came to understand that being chair is a selfless job and that research activity will most likely take a back seat to everything else. She found she relied on the hustle skills she gained as a first-generation college student from a single-parent household and realized the need to seek opportunities to help her navigate the role. Susan and Ollie found a way to negotiate for additional funding to support their research, as they also recognized that time would be limited. Jane, Pippin, and June all shared about opportunities offered by a larger alliance of similar universities that help develop leadership skills and connect them with others in similar positions outside of their institutions. Each was applying to participate in some of that organization's cohort programs for the coming year, hoping to have the time to devote to their learning.

Finding time to participate in internal offerings, particularly those focused on conflict management, was part of Clara's plan. However, she recognized that she also needed to find the mental capacity to engage with the topics. Even if she found the time, she did not feel she would

have the energy to invest in the opportunity. Suzanne's perspective from serving as a chair once before offered a slightly different insight, and she wanted chairs to invest more time in being strategic when they begin: "If there are things you want to accomplish as chair, start to work on them early, or you get derailed by everything else." Suzanne also advocated for more time to discuss deeper structural issues that often never happen because people get busy and can only deal with what is happening at the surface level.

Jane viewed the role of the chair as being an impartial mediator, able to help both faculty and students. Her current release from teaching provided a neutral space for her to interact with students since she was not overseeing any of them in the classroom. She worried that if she were to teach in the future, there could be a conflict of interest if a student came to her with concerns and she also had that student in a class. Embedded within this is also Jane's desire to become more knowledgeable about mental health issues as they relate to both students and employees. A significant amount of time during her first year was spent on crisis hotlines or working with the dean of students. It has become such an issue that she advocated that mental health needs be discussed at the college's fall chair retreat.

Compartmentalization was an essential skill for Clara as the thought that she should always be working on something else was not helpful, especially when there "are so many totally different important things that you have to keep on top of, or they sort of fester and get out of hand." Susan also experienced this but with an emotional sense of urgency. At her son's high school graduation, she found herself worrying about annual evaluations. Learning to compartmentalize and give herself time to focus on one issue at a time was a challenge she was working to improve.

In the midst of overwhelm, the women chairs acknowledged a few positives that came from working to develop new skills. Suzanne saw investing time in understanding her leadership style as an essential tool for learning how she could help and work with others. June and Jane emphasized the importance of developing their own communities as chairs to help navigate various aspects of the job. As one of the few female leaders of color at her institution, Jane has worked to establish connections with other Black department chairs at conferences and is also exploring an emerging program for Black women department chairs. Embracing the academic cycle provided a foundation for Clara and Ollie to develop their skills around different processes and expectations. Confidence grew as the year progressed, and more opportunities arose to practice new skills. Participating in processes for the first time, like annual reviews, was initially daunting for Clara and Susan. Being new to the institution, Clara wanted to be extremely thorough with her reviews and become acquainted with every faculty member's work. Each review took her almost a day to complete, which was unsustainable. Once she had completed the process, she examined how to adjust for the future to make it more efficient and equitable. Clara was particularly enthusiastic about laying the groundwork for developing new initiatives to improve equity. She acknowledged the need to understand change management and build slowly to create lasting change rather than making a sudden disruption that would not have been sustainable and could have caused more harm in the process. Just as their confidence increased throughout the year, all eight chairs recognized they were building self-capacity and valued the different skill sets they were improving.

Conclusion

This chapter used the narratives of the eight participants to illustrate what they needed to learn as new chairs, the challenges they faced in that process, and the types of resources they

relied on to acquire the needed knowledge. The stories the women shared emphasized that the learning process is complex and challenges are plentiful. Nevertheless, as they approached the end of the first-year learning curve, they recognized new capacities within themselves. While resources varied across institutions, even when present, the chairs rarely felt they had the time to fully engage in learning all of the aspects of the job. The next chapter will discuss how these findings have implications for future women chairs and department chairs in general.

CHAPTER 6: DISCUSSION AND IMPLICATIONS

This study aimed to gain a deeper understanding of and improve the experiences of women department chairs in a select group of public R1 institutions. As detailed earlier, eight women department chairs each participated in two interviews at different points in their first year as a new chair to explore this study's guiding questions:

Research Question: What are the lived experiences of new women department chairs, in terms of challenges and successes, as they transition into their new professional role over the course of their first year?

- Sub-question 1: During the period of their first year as a department chair, in what ways do the challenges and successes they experience relate to each of three important domains of effective academic leadership development (i.e., Conceptual Understanding, Skill Development and Reflective Practice)?
- Sub-question 2: In what ways and to what extent do key factors associated with transition theory relate to the transition process new women chairs experience?
- Sub-question 3: Are there other factors that relate to the transition experience of women department chairs throughout their first year?

Using narrative analysis to analyze the interview data, the women's descriptions of their experiences were transcribed and coded multiple times. The first round of coding was deductive, building upon the theory and conceptual framework that frame this study. Additional rounds of coding became more inductive as themes emerged that went beyond the initially defined categories. As the analysis progressed, it became clear that there were many similarities in the women's experiences during their first year as department chair. Challenges were plentiful throughout the first year, with only a small amount of time involving successes. However,

despite there being fewer overall successes that the chairs reported experiencing, the positive situations they reported encountering often outweighed the negativity the challenges brought to their experience. The previous chapter explored in depth how the stories shared by the women revealed common themes for what it means to be a woman transitioning into the department chair role and how learning emerged as a critical theme for all involved in the study. This chapter will summarize the key findings and significant themes, discuss how the narratives produced relate to the initial theories, share implications for practice, and address limitations of the study along with applications for future research.

Summary of Key Findings

Comparing the experiences of the women chairs in this study to the last 30-40 years of literature about the role reveals that the only significant change is that the job is becoming more stressful and complex (Gmelch et al., 2017). Research continues to explore ways to make the role more manageable, but no significant progress has been made in creating noteworthy and sustainable change in this crucial role. For those stepping into this position, there is an acknowledgment that this will be a demanding transition that will influence all aspects of their lives. Despite stepping into the "same role", it is vital to distinguish that not everyone will have a similar transition or the same learning curve, as they all bring different experiences with them. Stepping into the chair role also extends beyond simply taking on a new job. New chairs often experience a shift in perceptions of who they are as faculty members to who they are as new leaders. They then work to reconcile how the other identities they hold play a role in this process. Building from these ideas, four major themes emerged from this study: the role of gender, the impact of intersecting identities, the connection with theory, and the need to change the narrative about the department chair role.

The Role of Gender

While the chair role can be demanding for anyone, women in this study shared how their identities brought additional hidden labor, including navigating biases related to gender stereotypes and being perceived as an ally for other women who had not previously had a voice in the department. Understanding their first-year experience as a chair can only be done when examining the clear role gender played in how the women were treated culturally and the systemic policies and practices that come from a gendered institution. Half of the participants in this study were the first women chairs in their department, and one additional participant was the first woman of color in the role. With the majority of the new women chairs being the "first" in their unit, hidden labor was not expected and was difficult to account for, yet it was an authentic part of the transition experiences for the women in this study. Studies of women academics also show that hidden labor is a continuation of what women encounter at all levels of their careers, especially for faculty of color (Misra et al., 2012; Gonzales & Terosky, 2020). Higher education has witnessed a substantial increase in the number of women entering the professoriate; yet, organizations still operate based on what a male professor's life typically looked like 40-50 years ago (Misra et al., 2012). Not being tasked with the majority of caregiving responsibilities, men were able to separate and prioritize work above their home life, which created a bind for women who could not easily divide their family and professional commitments. Traditional academic success, which focuses on individual achievements rather than investing in community-based or collaborative work, also contradicts research that shows these are the spaces women are drawn to. Women academics do not necessarily want to subscribe to that somewhat archaic way of working and are striving to redefine roles based on more feminist approaches (Gonzalez & Terosky, 2020).

Intersecting Identities

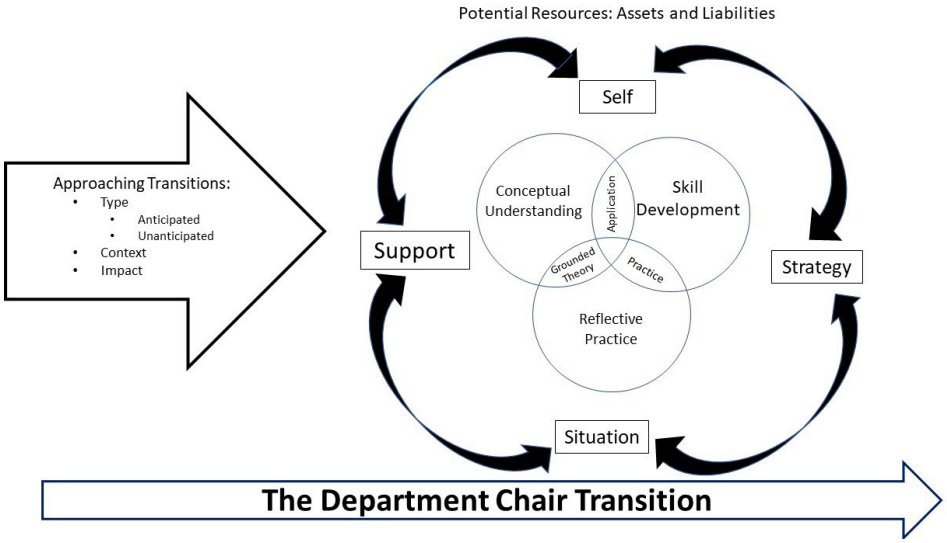
Those chairs who also held additional underrepresented identities felt that they had even more to deal with in the job because of the necessity to advocate for what they needed and for others like themselves. One of the most significant challenges for the chairs with intersecting identities was around the types and amount of hidden labor they must deal with. Since institutions were designed around what a white male's academic career would look like (Misra et al., 2012), the advice to women has been to try and avoid the hidden labor and focus on the core elements of the job that "count." However, research shows that women are making the decision to invest their time in supporting students and colleagues at the expense of their own research (Misra et al., 2012), and the same sentiment was true for the women in this study. While this study did not explore intersectionality as a guiding question, the women chairs with intersecting identities of race, sexuality, or ability shared distinct sets of experiences that need to be considered when examining the needs of new chairs and how they choose to approach the needs of the department to ensure all members are successful.

Connection to Theory

This study was guided by a combination of Schlossberg's Transition theory (Schlossberg et al., 1995) and Gmelch and Buller's (2015) Framework for Developing Academic Leaders. Gmelch and Buller outlined three domains they present as critical for developing academic leaders: Conceptual Understanding of the job, Development of the Skills needed to operate effectively and efficiently, and Reflective Practice to help develop self-awareness. While these three elements help illuminate how new chairs experience their development, my data led me to believe that a piece was missing when considering how these three areas can be applied to individuals who bring a variety of identities and experiences with them as they transition from

faculty to chair. Situating Gmelch and Buller's (2015) framework within Schlossberg's Transition Theory (Schlossberg et al., 1995) provides additional context for understanding how an individual moves through a transition, focusing not on the actual transition itself but on the variables that affect the individual and influence the eventual outcome (Schlossberg, 1981).

Figure 11: Model situating Gmelch and Buller's (2015) framework for developing academic leaders within Schlossberg's transition theory (Schlossberg et al., 1995)



The "4 S's" (Situation, Self, Support, and Strategy) in Schlossberg's theory represent the additional factors that may influence a transition experience and help determine an individual's ability to cope with the challenges transition brings. For new academic leaders, specifically the women in this study, incorporating the complexities that come from Situation, Self, Support, and Strategy brought perspective to why or why not they may be investing time in Understanding the Role, Skill Development, and engaging in Reflective Practice. In this study, the factors of Self (the identities the women each held) influenced the transition heavily. The identities they held—gender, race, age, and ability—contributed to how they navigated their transition and had implications for how the Situation (i.e., how they were selected to become chair) evolved. Those

with intersecting identities face further challenges that are often overlooked from an institutional perspective.

Applying Transition Theory to the three elements identified by Gmelch and Buller provided context for understanding aspects not typically addressed when designing workplace professional development. Often, development only focuses on new chairs learning policies and processes but does not recognize their need to develop new communities and networks different from when they were faculty. Especially for those from underrepresented identities who are dealing with biases and hidden work, providing space for stories to be shared and connections to be made allows them to see that they are not alone and that not everyone transitioning into the chair role will follow the same path or need the same experiences. Demographics are shifting, and more women are moving into leadership roles; however, implicit and explicit biases from colleagues around gender, as well as additional factors such as race, age, and ability, also impact a new chair's ability to feel they can manage the role successfully.

The decision to combine these models reinforced that while there is a need for new chairs to understand the job, develop new skills, and become reflective practitioners, the process of achieving this will not be the same for everyone. Chairs first need to understand who they are (Self) and how their circumstances (Situation) will affect how and what they learn. Additionally, these aspects of their identities and lives will influence the types of Strategies and Support they can access as part of their learning process. For women, particularly those with intersecting identities, finding a community that resonates with their experiences can be challenging due to the lack of representation. Not having that community of support can lead to feelings of isolation and not wanting to reach out to others because you are not sure if what you are feeling is related to your gender, race, age, ability, or other factors. Acknowledging that the individual who is

progressing through the transition brings along all aspects of their identity is a holistic approach that, while not dismissed, is not a part of Gmelch and Buller's framework. Transition Theory helps bring attention to the idea that individuals from traditionally underrepresented groups may face additional hurdles that make an already complex job even more challenging.

Changing the Narrative

The women's experiences in this study exhibited many themes discussed in current literature and theories. Their stories aligned with studies about chairs regardless of gender; nevertheless, the importance of identity, including gender, was vital to framing the discussions and understanding how the participants perceived their roles to be different from male chairs. These findings have led to confirmation of the view that more needs to be done to support women and other chairs who are not traditionally represented in the position and to consider changing the overall narrative about becoming a department chair.

In most units, the design of the department chair role, having someone step into the role every three to five years, creates a dynamic with the position being viewed as a burden that most faculty try to avoid. Half of the women did not apply to be a chair, but this idea of stepping into a role because it is best for the department, although not necessarily best for their career, aligned with a more recent phenomenon called the "glass cliff." The glass cliff concept asserts that women will take on positions in organizations experiencing extreme change or transition because it is one of the few opportunities to move into a leadership role (Ryan & Haslam, 2007). This gendered tendency for women to step up when no one else will also aligns with gender stereotypes that women are more willing to set aside their career aspirations because they want to care for their unit (Kruse, 2022). Most of the women interviewed resonated with the concept of the glass cliff and hoped that accepting the position would not derail their research plans.

However, they acknowledged that their time was no longer their own as they were now responsible for their department.

Regardless of how they became the new department chair, the women reflected on how they all felt as though they had been thrown into the role. While various opportunities and support structures were in place to help the women in this study transition into their roles, they felt a lack of encouragement from their leaders to dedicate time to participating in and learning the roles. There was a desire to invest time participating in different learning opportunities related to becoming the chair, yet the new women chairs felt they were not actually encouraged to take the time needed for learning.

The apparent need for more dedicated time to learn the role was accompanied by the additional need for different types of learning. Most of the learning experiences the chairs described focused on specific policies, tasks, or skills, which are all critical foundational information. However, with the complexities of the role, learning needed to progress beyond developing competency around particular skills to developing the capability to deal with complex problems as they arise. The chair role has many unpredictable situations, and it would be nearly impossible to equip the chairs for everything they may encounter. The chairs acknowledged the importance of reflective practice as part of their learning, but until it was discussed in the interviews, many did not even know they were engaging in reflection. Gmelch and Buller (2015) identify Reflective Practice as one of the three key elements vital for developing academic leaders, yet little attention is devoted to building in reflection as part of the learning experiences. In the next section, recommendations for institutional leaders, faculty development practitioners, and new women chairs are specifically framed to think about how to not only help with the transition into the role but to examine what it would it take to create a

narrative for the chair role that embodies the diversity of the individuals stepping into the position.

Implications for Practice

Gmelch and Mishkin (2004) suggest that "higher education will continue to have a "leadership crisis" as long as chairing a department remains an unmanageable and unproductive option for faculty members" (p. 132). An argument could be made that the current operation of the department chair position itself constitutes a career "cliff," diverting faculty members from their research to focus on administrative work, which they may or may not wish to pursue. Many faculty try to avoid the role because they do not want to deal with the stress of the role or have to worry about falling behind in their research. Analyzing the stories of the women chairs revealed several implications for strategies to help make the role more manageable by initiating new learning strategies and exploring how the role could be reimagined to reflect the needs of a more diverse body of department chairs. These suggestions will be discussed in relation to those in institutional leadership roles, current faculty development practitioners, and new chairs themselves.

Implications for Institutional Leaders

When organizing the recommendations from the study's findings, the majority fell to the institutional level. I offer five areas for institutional leaders to examine regarding the transitions of women department chairs: examining policies and procedures, defining expectations, recognizing hidden work, developing a culture of appreciation, and encouraging faculty to invest time in leadership development.

In the 2007 book *Rethinking Faculty Work,* a recommendation was put forward to:

> Involve department chairs, deans, and faculty leaders in an examination of the roles and responsibilities of department chairs, in view of the time base and duration of the chair assignment, and consider alternative structures and support systems that can better accommodate the roles and responsibilities of the department chair. (Gappa et al., 2007, p. 180).

Over fifteen years later, this idea still seems novel as the department chair role continues to increase in scope and stress (Gmelch et al., 2017). In her interview, Susan talked about how, even over the course of one year, the role seems to have taken on more responsibilities, showing that this sentiment is still very relevant. When examining possible implications for administrators, there is a question as to why not much seems to have changed. As much as I would have liked to find a one-size-fits-all solution, significant differences in colleges and departments do not make that feasible. When providing these ideas, they are not meant to be applied broadly. However, there are approaches that current deans and chairs can consider when taking into account how department size, discipline, climate, and other factors might affect the solution.

While there is not one solution to best support new chairs, deans can play a role by engaging chairs in conversations about what they see as needed. One strategy might be to centralize or share some of the administrative functions of the chair role by appointing a business manager or associate dean at the college level with specific portfolios of work. A couple of the women chairs had associate chairs to help with some departmental responsibilities and to whom they could delegate some of the work. For more transactional duties, having an administrative assistant to help manage the tasks could give them time to focus on the more strategic needs of

the department. Associate deans may be able to focus on providing assistance in terms of being resources to the chairs and helping guide them in budget, hiring, or disciplinary processes. In addition to the support these individuals could provide to a chair, they also could help with "consistency in decision-making and better coordination among autonomous academic units, internal administrative offices, and external agencies or audiences" (Gappa et al., 2007, p. 182).

Examining Policies and Practices. Higher education institutions also have an opportunity to examine practices and policies and how they have built expectations for faculty and leaders around the experiences of men, particularly those who are white and heterosexual (Gonzalez & Tersoky, 2020). Gender inequalities have, therefore, become embedded in institutional cultures and directly and indirectly affect women throughout their careers (Acker, 2012). Women and those with additional intersecting identities demonstrate a preference for different approaches to navigating academia. Their lives and work are intertwined, and they rely on their relationships with family, friends, and colleagues to help them succeed, rather than the traditional individualistic approach that academia has reinforced (Gonzalez & Tersoky, 2020). Building from this idea, developing opportunities to help women chairs could be situated as more communal, allowing for collaborative learning and support.

Just as women academics have found new ways to "defy established prescriptions of success" in their research and scholarship (Gonzalez & Tersoky, 2020, p. 284), many of the women chairs identified a desire to find new ways of operating in the chair role that allow them to be present in other aspects of their lives as mothers, partners, friends, or caregivers and to encourage those with whom they work to do the same. Research indicates that when deciding where to focus their time, women often defer their own research to ensure their students and colleagues are supported, despite knowing that research is more highly valued by the institution

(Misra et al., 2012). This also resonates with the women chairs in this study, who often set aside their scholarship to serve the department. This demonstrates a need to step away from traditional metrics used to measure a department chairs success and engage in conversations about how a chair can be rewarded for the success of their department instead of only focusing on their own accomplishments as independent scholars.

Defining Expectations. Deans can play a significant role in the transition by defining expectations with the department chair when they first step into the position. All the chairs in the study did not receive a formal job description, nor did they have a conversation about expectations or how they would be evaluated. Outlining what the chair will be held accountable for (going beyond "anything that pertains to the department," as Suzanne mentioned) provides the chairs with a sense of direction that is one less thing they must try and figure out. This kind of discussion of expectations also helps establish a relationship with the dean and opens communication channels about what and when the dean wants to be looped in on specific situations versus what they expect the chair to handle.

Gmelch and Miskin (2004) discuss the importance of deans encouraging chairs to participate in their own leadership development. For chairs to take time away from their multiple priorities, they "need to feel that leadership development opportunities are supported and valued" (p. 137). Institutional leaders as a whole need to prioritize a learning culture not only for the students but for the employees. The idea that "learning is valued and rewarded and elements that impede learning are not tolerated" is harder to achieve than many assume due to traditionally held beliefs "about what work is and is not" (Prewitt, 2003, P. 59). To move to change this, deans have a level of influence over chairs that should be used to encourage investment of time in professional development, as "researchers have found that managers who perceive a greater

measure of support from their immediate bosses (deans) report a higher degree of motivation to attend and learn from training" (Gmelch & Miskin, 2004, p. 137).

Recognizing Hidden Work. Most faculty members are aware that assuming the chair role entails a decline in research productivity (Lucas, 1994; Gmelch & Miskin, 2004). When examining the chair role, institutions should carefully analyze how to configure the position to enable scholars to continue advancing their scholarship while leading a department. This became a concern for most of the women in this study, especially since they already felt a sense of guilt when deciding to prioritize their research or administrative work. Gmelch and Miskin's (2004) comparison of the chair role to the two faces of the Roman god Janus highlights the tension the chairs felt trying to stay invested in their faculty work while also tending to their administrative work. Susan and Clara specifically shared how they felt guilty no matter what they were working on because there was always a thought that they should be working on something else. With the additional "hidden work" women take on, they rarely feel they can accomplish everything in front of them.

Providing additional structures to help with the workload would be beneficial to attracting more individuals into the position so they do not feel they have to choose between being a chair or maintaining their identity as a researcher. This could mean creating an associate chair role to help with the chair's responsibilities or hiring a graduate student to support their research productivity. While the support that a chair receives will likely vary depending on the chair or institution, working with new or potential chairs to find a solution demonstrates a dean's investment in a chair's success in both aspects of their career, rather than forcing them to choose one over the other.

The women chairs in this study all had additional responsibilities related to their identities that increased the time they needed to devote to the role. Institutional culture plays a significant role in how women and individuals from underrepresented groups are treated, and this "hidden work" is an aspect that institutions can help manage, not just for leaders but for faculty throughout their careers. As one of the few black women leaders at her institution, Jane was often asked for her perspectives on racially motivated situations, and it became physically and emotionally draining. Institutions must examine how and when they call on women, especially women of color because the cumulative impact is significant. Jane also saw a significant increase in the number of students wanting to meet with her, many of whom were from underrepresented groups. Increasing representation in leadership, which begins with changing the composition of the faculty, is one way to create more equity in who is being asked to help in different situations. To achieve this, structures need to be established earlier in the careers of women and faculty of color that recognize the disproportionate amount of hidden work that women do, which contributes to the overall well-being of the department and its students. Instead of telling faculty to avoid this aspect of the job, Reid (2021) suggests departments work to define the types of invisible labor and provide credit for faculty who engage in this work.

For Kira, navigating the chair role with a visual impairment was not difficult because of the work but instead, because she constantly had to advocate for help with accessibility issues. She was provided with some student help only after asking but still had to ask other colleagues for help with things the institution could handle. Her hidden work as chair was mainly focused on not having accessible processes and documents. However, it was enough for her to say she would not consider moving up in administration because of all the issues she encounters as a

chair. Hidden work is an aspect of the role that must be accounted for if institutions want to honestly look at ways to rethink the position and create a more manageable role.

Developing a Culture of Appreciation. By providing feedback and recognizing the chairs when they do a good job, deans can play a critical role in creating a positive environment for chairs. A "lack of feedback increases role ambiguity for chairs, who often feel uncertain about how others perceive their performance and unsure about how far to go on their own in determining departmental direction" (Lucas, 1994, p. 23). The chairs in the study shared how even little acknowledgments showed them the dean was paying attention to their work and made a big difference in their self-confidence. In the first interview, when Jane was asked to rate herself on a one-five scale on the extent to which she felt transitioned into the role, a recent positive interaction with her dean made her feel more confident and she rated herself between 3.5-3.75. This gave her a sense of empowerment to do her work because she knew the dean was supportive of what she was doing. In the second interview, she realized that she may have inflated her transition number and thought a 2 or even 1.5 would have been a more accurate rating since the 3.5-3.75 was more representative of her current place on the transition scale. This showed how the impact of recognizing someone when they are doing a good job can influence an individual's confidence.

Just as deans need to acknowledge the work of their department chairs, institutions can also play a role in creating a culture of appreciation for chairs. Recognition can take various forms, but two specific areas are salary and awards. Chairs are still primarily rewarded for what they produce as faculty members. Taking time away from research can disadvantage a chair when they return to the faculty and are behind in their scholarship because of their time in administration (Hancock, 2007). Raises primarily focus on research productivity and do not often

consider the time and service the person devoted to the chair role, helping to elevate the work of their colleagues. As part of rethinking the structure of the chair role, salary should be commensurate with the work chairs are asked to do and salary decisions should take into account what the role means for other aspects of their career that chairs must give up.

In addition to salary, which is not always an issue for some chairs, there is also a need to recognize chairs at the institutional level for their work in their departments. Institutional leaders usually want chairs to be transformational leaders who "stimulate others to think in different ways and to excel, give individual consideration to others, and provide an organizational climate that helps others to accomplish activities of value and feel appreciated" (Lucas, 1994, p. 47). The chair role is often very isolating, and their work is frequently unnoticed. Showing that this work is valued outside of the department or the college signals that their work is appreciated. One institution has a specific award to recognize transformational leadership at the chair level. The nomination comes from within the unit and requires a leadership statement from the chair, along with a letter showing how the chair has a broad impact on faculty, staff, students, and even external stakeholders. An award like this illustrates to new chairs that there is institutional support for investing in transformative work. Recognizing the work of other chairs also shows new chairs that others have successfully worked through similar issues they may be encountering.

Encouraging Faculty to Invest in Leadership Development. Deans, provosts, chancellors, and presidents also have the opportunity to build a culture that encourages and rewards academics to invest in professional development and prepares them for leadership positions before they are called on to serve. Lucas (1994) talked about the department being "a learning environment for both faculty and students" (p.45). Most evaluation metrics for faculty

and academic leaders do not recognize an investment in leadership-related activities and primarily focus on research, with some attention to teaching and outreach. Hancock (2007) discussed how research is not viewed by chairs or deans as a critical part of the job, yet:

> teaching and administration do not offer the sort of tangible measures of accomplishment found in publication. Institutional status – and all benefit flowing from that – derives largely from the number and nature of its published works. That status sifts down to the faculty level where individual careers advance little except through research. Individual and institution alike suffer consequence when productive energies are otherwise consumed (p. 307).

Creating a space where faculty members feel supported and will not be "punished" because they did not focus all of their time on their research publications and obtaining grants is one way to allow for those who could be potential chairs in the future to explore developing leadership capacity. While most of the women in this study still closely embraced their identity as researchers, transitions into administrative roles can sometimes be abrupt, and individuals need to feel prepared to step into critical positions when needed.

Preparations need to go beyond just learning a set of tasks or processes and include key leadership competencies such as communication, conflict management and change management, among others. Allowing individuals to invest time in professional learning before they are in a formal leadership role creates a sense of investment in individuals, leading to retention and a pipeline of potential leaders. In Suzanne's case, the department faced a crisis and had to bring in someone from outside the discipline because they realized none of the current faculty were prepared to take on the chair role. If there had been a focus on developing leadership capacity

among those who could potentially be leaders, the department might have had someone ready to step into the role.

Implications for Faculty Development Practitioners

This study has implications not only for provosts and deans but also for faculty developers. I offer four recommendations for faculty development practitioners in the areas of: enabling learning, providing guidance to navigating resources, supporting better time use, and enhancing orientation. Academics have been trained to be independent (Lucas, 1994), and the work habits they needed as a scholar are no longer the competencies they rely on as a chair (Gmelch & Miskin, 2004). Faculty enter the role of department chair with a basic understanding of the role and responsibilities but most likely do not know all the expectations. When they want to obtain job-related skills and knowledge, finding opportunities to help them learn can be challenging. In some cases, new academic leaders view participating in leadership training as insulting because of their success as leading scholars in their discipline (Ruben et al., 2017).

Andragogy, or self-directed learning, is a core adult learning theory that can help faculty developers design initial development opportunities for new chairs that allow the chairs to be active participants in the learning process. Andragogy centers on the learner as an internally motivated, independent participant looking for learning directly relevant to their current situation and that builds from their experiences (Knowles, 1980). Knowles (1980) describes how andragogy brings the learner into the learning process and organizes experiences around increasing competencies, with the teacher becoming more of a facilitator instead of being the one to transfer the knowledge. Principles of andragogy are essential to help those in faculty developer roles understand the chairs' experiences and needs while partnering with them on their learning journey.

Many faculty or leadership development practitioners focus on developing competencies in the chairs and rarely move beyond that level of learning. Focusing on developing competencies can be collaborative with chairs but is often more prescriptive in how workshops and programs are designed to inform chairs and others about specific institutional policies or procedures. However, this approach does not always provide space to build individuals' capability to face various challenging situations. The women in the study anticipated learning obligatory tasks and responsibilities that would benefit from an approach grounded in andragogy, allowing them to work on developing new skills and understanding the content. Opportunities grounded in an andragogical approach might take the form of a workshop that provides an overview of how the institution handles disciplinary problems (a challenge that chairs must often address) and may offer perspectives from other chairs who have had to navigate a related situation. The new chairs can then take what they learn, work within the parameters provided, and adapt to their leadership style and the unit.

Enabling Learning. The findings in this study suggest that thinking of the first-year transition experience as an opportunity for growth and development is not a typical approach to becoming a department chair. Learning is critical to the development and success of a new chair, but what that looks like is not the same for everyone. As the women chairs moved throughout their first year, it became clear they were looking for learning opportunities to help them manage situations for which they did not always have a clear answer.

While andragogy allows the learner to be an active agent in their learning, the newer concept of heutagogy can take the elements of andragogy further by allowing the learners to determine how and what they learn (Blaschke, 2012). Heutagogy has emerged recently in international discussions about adapting learning to the extreme pace of change and finding ways

to navigate the ever-growing volume of knowledge (Glassner & Back, 2020). This concept of heutagogy offers ideas relevant to the findings of this study. Development practitioners have an opportunity to move beyond providing learning experiences that are pre-determined to assisting chairs with designing their own learning paths. Heutagogy places the "learner as the major agent in their own learning, which occurs as a result of personal experiences" (Hase & Kenyon, 2007, p. 112). In the stories the chairs shared in this study, they discussed bringing in experiences from other positions they held, or opportunities that provided them with different skills, or even having groups of people like themselves to talk with and work through difficult situations together.

The progression from andragogy to heutagogy can be viewed as a continuum, taking learners from focusing on competency to developing capability. While competency is important to ensuring the chair acquires the knowledge and skills needed to do the job, "capability is characterized by learner confidence in his or her competency" (Blaschke, 2012, p. 59). Having competency as their base, capable learners can then focus on their learning process by reflecting on their experiences as they happen using double-loop learning (Glassner & Back, 2020). Single-loop learning focuses on having students, in this case, new chairs, learn to find solutions to specific problems (Blaschke, 2012). Instead of following a linear process, as andragogy encourages, "double-loop learning is non-linear. It allows the students to react to problems, question what they have studied, and reflect on existing theories, values, or assumptions that they feel are being challenged." (Eberle, 2009, p. 183). Argryis and Schon (1978) discussed how double-loop learning is a "process of inquiry" (p.23) that challenges institutional norms to find new ways to solve problems. Learners who are able to engage with the double-loop process become more aware of how to adapt their competency, skills, and knowledge when new

situations present themselves because they are focused on the process and just the outcome (Blaschke, 2012).

Using the tenets of heutagogy allows academics to build on their identities as scholars and follow a non-linear path with "no predefined rule of how to move from one note to another" (Glassner & Black, 2020, p. 84). It provides them with the agency to be active participants in developing what and how they learn. Heutagogy "is most effective when directed to adult learners who are already professionally qualified and are self-motivated and self-determined to improve practice due to the challenges and complexities at the workplace" (Chacko, 2018, p. 280). With chairs consistently dealing with an ever-changing portfolio of work, having the ability to translate their skills and knowledge to different situations is critical to managing the workload and moving from one complex task to another. For those who work to help chairs, using principles of adult learning and moving along the continuum from andragogy to heutagogy provides different ways to provide support and help chairs learn together about what individuals in the role need best to serve the institution, their colleagues, and themselves.

Andragogy plays a significant role in developing the competencies of academic leaders, particularly when they first step into the position. It helps them develop Conceptual Understanding and Skill Development defined by Buller and Gmelch's framework for Developing Academic Leaders. However, the focus on Reflective Practice is a key aspect of heutagogy. Reflection allows an individual the ability to "transfer knowledge from situation to situation knowledgeably and confidently," even when the situations can be in an area they have not dealt with before. (Eberle, 2009, p. 185). Through reflection, chairs may be able to find different ways of problem-solving or see where they need to improve; however, they also need agency to keep them moving forward. To develop self-determined learners, having a sense of

agency allows the chairs to move forward in finding opportunities to help them, which works together with reflection to build greater capacity.

Providing Guidance for Navigating Resources. The principles of heutagogy are also applied when navigating the massive amount of knowledge produced and available online. Students have access to varying levels of resources across the web and can reach out anytime to consult the "wisdom of the masses" (Glassner & Black, 2020, p.4). Instructors, in this case, leadership development practitioners, change their role from developing content to aggregating and vetting different opportunities and directing chairs to reliable content and opportunities. Instead of chairs taking the time to search the vast number of resources, the facilitator can serve as a partner by searching and screening the plethora of resources and advising chairs on what might be most beneficial to them at specific stages. These opportunities can align with the more andragogical approaches, helping chairs to understand the job and develop competency in specific skills. In contrast, other opportunities could focus on developing the chair's capability for engaging in double-loop learning, allowing them to engage in purposeful reflection.

Supporting Better Time Use. Time was a consistent challenge for all of the women in the study, especially when it came to having time to learn the job. To help chairs maximize the time they invest in learning, faculty developers can infuse elements of both andragogy and heutagogy in program offerings. It would be nearly impossible to develop training for every situation a chair may encounter; yet, by bringing together principles of andragogy and heutagogy, faculty development practitioners can provide chairs with the foundational pieces they need and help them see how double-loop learning can come into play. Faculty development practitioners could offer a session where the fundamentals of specific policies are discussed, followed by conversations with other chairs about their experiences in related situations and how

they have addressed challenges from said policies. Having the time to reflect with other chairs brings in double-loop learning for those who are new as well as those who may have been in the role for some time.

As discussed, heutagogy promotes having the learner self-determine what and how they learn, an approach to learning that can help new chairs manage their time and find opportunities that work within their schedules. Aggregated collections of opportunities offered to chairs, like those mentioned above, could allow them to set up a learning plan that aligns with their learning goals and works around their schedules.

Unfortunately, for many of the chairs in this study, professional development was the first thing to come off the calendar if things became too hectic. However, they often regretted not being able to participate in something that could help them better manage their jobs. In our virtual world, practitioners should find ways to build relevant development opportunities that fit the chairs' time constraints. These do not have to be highly structured experiences, and as many of the women chairs shared, finding a community was crucial for helping them navigate the first year. For some of the women in the study, the most challenging part was finding ways to connect with others with whom they could build new relationships. Finding the time in their already busy schedules to seek out and establish a community was complicated and required searching for individuals they felt they could trust. This may not always happen at the institutional level, so encouraging chairs to find their community may involve connecting them with disciplinary or professional groups within programs to help them acclimate into leadership roles.

Enhancing Orientation. The last piece related to learning is about the orientations the chairs received when they started. Much of the orientation content was structured to deliver information in one specific event. Alternatively, faculty development practitioners have an

opportunity to use orientation to begin an onboarding process that could take place across the first two years to encourage continual engagement in learning. Women chairs in this study felt fairly transitioned after their first year; however, some, like Ollie, felt that after the "honeymoon period" of the first-year ends, there will be different expectations and hurdles she will need to handle. Adult learning principles that focus on competency and capability are essential for balancing an experience for chairs that would allow them to relate to content depending on where they currently feel they are, while still providing them opportunities to learn. This could mean offering sessions in the first few months that help new chairs become familiar with the basics of the job and help provide them with opportunities to develop new skills. As they move further into the role, additional opportunities could help chairs stay connected to learning by promoting opportunities to engage with double-loop learning that helps them learn to adapt the information they have when confronted with new situations.

Implications for New Women Chairs

While institutional leaders and faculty developers have responsibilities for supporting new chairs, the chairs themselves also play a role in their own preparation and development. In this section, I offer suggestions focused on two areas, based on this study, that chairs may find useful: finding community and developing boundaries. The women in this study all came into the role with different understandings of what the job would entail, and for some, these assumptions were more accurate than others. Despite their initial expectations for the job, each woman had to navigate their own first-year transition and decide how they wanted to approach learning how to become a department chair. With adult learning, the learner actively participates in the experience, which means there is an opportunity for new chairs to shape their transition experience. Training and development opportunities offered at the institution and college levels

were met with varying satisfaction levels, but what was most important was that the women were open to engaging with the learning experiences they were offered. Any new chair should consider taking advantage of different opportunities designed to help them understand the role, develop new skills, or engage with other colleagues. However, professional development was sometimes the first thing removed from the calendar when the schedule became too chaotic. Nevertheless, Clara and Kira acknowledged that they wanted to keep the time to participate in development activities in their second year because they saw the usefulness and felt they missed out on participating in their first year. The advice is for women chairs to take the time to learn from the professional development opportunities provided.

Finding Community. Another source of learning and support comes from finding a community. Chairs often must establish new relationships because of the nature of their role, and they can no longer discuss details of the job with their faculty colleagues. Isolation and loneliness are everyday feelings for chairs, but connecting with other chairs in similar situations is a form of peer mentoring that helps with learning the job and provides a network with which to process complex situations. Some of the new women chairs in the study found networks at their institutions in both formal and informal ways. Clara shared that her institution provided a coffee hour for new women chairs that was an informal discussion group. Kira found her community with another woman chair at the institution with whom she could connect when she had questions or concerns. Susan did not feel comfortable sharing details of her unit with other chairs at her institution because it was a small community where everyone tended to know each other. However, at her annual disciplinary conference, she found a group of newish chairs whom she had met as faculty members. As they all were in a new career phase, they could openly share and not worry if someone knew the person they were discussing. Jane had difficulty finding

community as the only female chair of color at her institution, but she also found her group at a disciplinary conference. Meeting with other chairs of color gave her the support she could not get from others at her institution. All of these forms of community and support show that there is not one right approach for each person. As a new chair, finding a community may take some time, but having people who provide support is vital to the transition process.

Developing Boundaries. Honoring boundaries around time was viewed as essential for development but was even more crucial when it came to time with family and self-care. Recognizing early on what the non-negotiables are was critical to not losing themselves in the job. Kira did this by hiring a personal trainer to make herself exercise, and because she was paying for that person's time, she would not move her fitness time. Susan and Jane both shared that they neglected their physical activity and had less-than-healthy diets in their first year but knew they could not continue with those negative habits and were already making efforts to change that for year two. Establishing boundaries not only helps with managing stress, but the women shared the guilt that came with not being physically or mentally present for their children. For those without children, this feeling extended to being present for their partner or family. The first year has the complexity of finding time to learn the job in addition to doing the work, but this is not a reason to let go of any notion of life outside of work. While the chair role was often discussed throughout the interviews as all-consuming, establishing and, more specifically, maintaining boundaries was one way for the women to regain some control over their situations.

Limitations of Study

While conducting this study, two specific limitations emerged. The first issue pertains to how most of the challenges and successes the women in this study identified could apply to

anyone assuming the chair role. Gender very clearly had a role in the experiences of the women chairs who participated in this study; however, without a comparable study of male chairs, it is difficult to fully understand the degree to which gender affects the transition experience. Interviewing male chairs using the same questions would provide a comparative sample to examine the role of gender.

The second limitation involved the recruitment of participants. Finding a diverse sample of participants was complicated as there was not a significant population to recruit from. Initial recruitment emails were met with responses from two institutions that they did not have any new female chairs, and some institutional leaders were very protective of their new chairs and only offered to forward the recruitment email versus providing contact information. Within the small cohort of new female chairs, diversity of race and ethnicity was extremely lacking. Within the small group of potential participants, three new chairs responded that they did not have time to participate, and two offered to participate but were only able to take part at very limited times that fell outside of the study's timeline. One chair who initially agreed to participate emailed on the day of her first interview that a family situation had arisen and never reconnected to reschedule. Based on the current demographics of academic leaders (Gmelch et al., 2016), the lack of diversity in the roles should not have been overly surprising but is not reflective of the increase in the number of women and women of color moving up in the ranks of academia (González, 2010).

Areas for Future Research

As higher education continues to face drastic changes, the role of department chair becomes even more critical to an institution's operations. Cipriano's (2011) reference to chairs as a "lynchpin" highlights the importance of the role, yet not many changes have been made

regarding the structures and support institutions provide to individuals in these roles. Over the past thirty-forty years, literature on chairs has often come from a core group of researchers. Gmelch, Buller, and Cipriano are a few who have done significant work to elevate this critical role; however, until the last few years, there have been very few studies focusing on how demographics, particularly gender or race, affect the individuals taking the job. While women, those with intersecting identities, and those from other traditionally underrepresented communities are slowly making progress in increasing their presence in leadership positions, there is also research that shows the increasing complexity and expectations of academic leadership positions is making it hard to attract and retain individuals from diverse backgrounds (González, 2010). While overall diversity was lacking in the sample lacking, those with additional intersecting underrepresented identities raised issues that were not fully explored within this study's parameters. Bringing more attention to the stories of women and other traditionally underrepresented groups, especially those with intersecting identities, could help encourage others with diverse identities to consider becoming a chair. Understanding more about the experiences of different groups in the role could also elevate the need for organizational change around the construction of these critical jobs. To continue to have people willing to step up to become chair, more research could be done on different departmental structures in terms of how the organization of a department's workforce contributes to the transition and success of a new chair (e.g., are there associate chairs or administrative staff playing key roles). Other areas for investigation include analyzing institutional salary and reward structures and how chairs can continue to manage an ever-increasing workload.

One of the initial barriers I found to studying individuals from diverse groups who serve in the chair role is a lack of demographic data against which to benchmark. Unlike other roles

like provost, president, or dean, the identities of those serving in department chair roles are not tracked or reported beyond their institution, so it is challenging to ascertain broader trends in who serves in these critical roles. Past studies relied on surveys requesting participants to self-identify. Researchers analyze only the data they receive so, given limited data collection, findings about representation of different identities within those who are chairs can be misleading. Valuable future research could involve the organization and analysis of demographic data at a national level that could provide a foundation for better understanding the identities of those serving in these roles and how long they are staying in the position.

There is also a lack of research on the life cycle of chairs. Most chairs serve their time and then move back to the faculty or into other administrative roles, but a few choose to continue as chair. Understanding more about what motivates them to stay for a second term could be insightful in helping attract others to the job and gaining perspective on what could change the role to make it more manageable. Such research should include questions about how the identity of a chair plays a role in this decision in addition to support structures and strategies they utilize to help with the complexities of managing the role and how chairs maintain their faculty roles (if they choose to do so). Another aspect of the life cycle is how to transition someone out of the role while also onboarding someone new. Knowledge transfer is critical to helping a new chair succeed and allows the outgoing chair an opportunity to reflect on their own transition into the next phase of their career. Future studies could examine chairs at different stages in their appointment to recognize how the experiences of individuals provide insight for future chairs and the institutions they serve.

Conclusion

Looking at over thirty years of literature about the development and support of department chairs, one sees that there has not been much change despite the shift in who is stepping into these roles and the transformations higher education is navigating. History seemingly repeats itself as chairs are still coming into a role with little to no preparation, yet the portfolio of work is becoming more complicated and stressful (Gmelch et al., 2017). While some studies have presented potential solutions to ease the workload for department chairs, a sustainable change to the role has yet to take hold. The complexities of higher education, including the range of disciplinary differences, the size of the departments, or even the skills of the leaders in the roles, lead to complexities in the chair role that cannot be easily altered. Adding in the additional intricacy that comes with being a woman or from an underrepresented group, the chair role is not one many are eager to accept.

Transitioning into a department chair role is not just a new job for a faculty member to step into but also a new and sometimes complicated identity. For the women in this study, this was an adjustment some were more ready to make than others. Half of them sought the position, whereas the other half had not planned on assuming the chair role. The one commonality was that all the participants in this study took the chair role because they wanted to serve their colleagues and help their department succeed. Some of the women thought this willingness to serve could be related to the gendered stereotype that women are more nurturing leaders than their male colleagues, and for some, this may have been the case, but it was not always easy to parse out what was related to gender or other identity characteristics.

As the women shared in their interviews, finding a way for them to manage the many expectations they have for themselves, the expectations the institution imposed upon them, and

those expectations from society added to the stress that Gmelch et al. (2017) found to be increasing for the chairs almost ten years ago. For the chair role to become sustainable, institutions have an opportunity to examine the structure of the role to make it more manageable while also helping chairs learn the role. Just because chairs are leaders in their scholarly areas does not mean they have the skills and ability that translate to leading a department. Within higher education institutions, a learning culture needs to extend beyond the students and become embedded in the values experienced by faculty and staff. Lucas (1994) asserted that the chair "empowers others by creating a learning organization, one characterized by individuals striving for personal mastery and team learning and a chair committed to self-discovery and self-growth" (p. 45-46). For this to happen, I argue that institutions need to examine how chairs are being prepared and create a system that rewards learning beyond a chair's particular area of scholarship. If institutions also want to diversify the individuals serving in academic leadership roles, the learning experiences also need to promote the discussion of hidden work that differs depending on a person's intersection of identities. There is no one-size-all approach to developing new chairs but acknowledging that this is a learning process that does not end after the first year is essential to supporting individuals as they traverse their time as department chairs.

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APPENDIX A: SAMPLE EMAIL INVITATION

Email Header: Invitation to Participate in Doctoral Research

Dear Dr. _____,

I am writing to request your voluntary participation in a research study as part of my doctoral dissertation. My name is Cindi Leverich, and I am a doctoral candidate in the Department of Educational Administration in Michigan State University's College of Education. My dissertation research explores the transition experiences of first-year department chairs. The purpose of the study is to understand your transition experience into the department chair role and to gain insights into how key domains related to academic leadership development are influencing this transition

As a new department chair of (department) _____ at (University) _____ your insights and perspectives will be a key component of my study. In order to gain a better understanding of your transition experience, I hope you will agree to participate in three semi-structured, 90-minute interviews that will take place over the course of the 2022-23 academic year. These interviews will be scheduled at times most convenient for you and will take place using Zoom.

The data gathered from interviews will be used only for the purposes of this study and your name, department, and institution will not be identified.

It is my hope that the study findings will not only contribute to the academic leadership literature but that they will also develop best practices for institutions as they welcome and support new department chairs. If you have any questions, please feel free to reach out to me at youngcin@msu.edu. This study has received approval through the MSU IRB Process.

Thank you in advance for your time, consideration, and insights. I very much look forward to your response.

Sincerely,

Cindi Leverich, MBA
Doctoral Student, College of Education
Michigan State University

APPENDIX B: INFORMED CONSENT FORM

Study Title: Exploring the Transition Experiences of Department Chairs

You are being asked to participate in a qualitative research study that seeks to understand your experience as a woman transitioning into the department chair role and to gain insights into how various factors relate to academic leadership development.

Participation in this study will involve your commitment to answer one short informational email and take part in two or three recorded Zoom interviews (one 60-minute, one 90-minute and the third if needed). You will be provided with a copy of the transcript from each of your interviews and will have time to review for any discrepancies.

Participation in this study is completely voluntary. You may end an interview at any point and may decline to answer any questions you do not feel comfortable answering. You may also feel free to take a break during any portion of the three interviews.
No major risks are anticipated. You acknowledge that if you do experience levels of discomfort emotionally or mentally, that you will be able to follow up with support resources provided by the researcher or those you have identified on your own.

No individually identifiable information about you, or provided by you during the research, will be shared with others without your written permission. You will self-select an identifying pseudonym that will be used on all written and verbal communication. All information obtained will be treated confidentially. Digital audio recordings of these sessions, along with a scanned version of this signed consent agreement, will be kept by the researcher on a password-protected hard drive and/or a password-protected online cloud service unless and until the recordings are destroyed. Excerpts of the transcription of interviews may appear verbatim in this research. This research will be used for a dissertation and any potentially published work

The investigator will answer any further questions about the research, now or during the course of the project. You acknowledge that by signing this form you are agreeing to take part in this research project, including video and audio-recorded interviews, and acknowledge that you will receive a signed copy of this consent form for your records.

I, (Print name) _____, agree to participate in a research study titled "*Exploring the Transition Experiences of Women Department Chairs Throughout their First Year"* conducted by Cindi Leverich (youngcin@msu.edu), Primary Investigator from the Department of Educational Administration at Michigan State University under the direction of Dr. Ann Austin (aaustin@msu.edu), Advisor and Professor, Department of Educational Administration, Michigan State University. I acknowledge that the interviews will be recorded. I acknowledge that my participation is voluntary, and I may refuse to participate or withdraw from the project at any time without any risk to myself. If this occurs, I am free to choose between destroying my contributions to the study or releasing them for use without my participation. If you should have any concerns about the informed consent process, you may contact the IRB Office at Michigan State University (irb@msu.edu or 517-355-2180).

Signature_____ Date_____

APPENDIX C: PROTOCOL FOR FIRST INTERVIEW

Thank you, {name}, for agreeing to be interviewed for this project. As I shared with you in the invitation, I am interested in gaining a better understanding of your experience as you are navigating your transition into the role of department chair throughout your first year.

I have developed an interview protocol that is divided into two segments based on a combination of Schlossberg's Transition Theory and Gmelch and Buller's Framework for developing academic leaders. This transition theory examines four major sets of factors that influence a person's ability to cope with a transition (these include Self, Situation, Support, and Strategy). For my research, I situate the three components of Gmelch and Buller's framework for developing academic leaders (Conceptual Understanding, Skill Development and Reflective Practice) within the transition process as a way to way understand how the four distinct factors may influence what is happening over the course of the first year. I will then use narrative analysis to interpret the stories shared with me to identify themes and construct meaning.

Today we will focus on getting to know you and your story, including what led you to take the position and the types of opportunities made available to help you transition into the role.

The second interview will build on what is discussed in the first interview and continue to explore support structures while also asking for your reflections on the overall experience of your first year in this role.

Do you have any questions before we begin? If we are good, is it ok to begin recording? {Turn on the device.} I need to gather your verbal consent {Wait for verbal consent}. Thank you. Just to be sure, I will review some information related to confidentiality, expectations, and benefits of this study.

1. First, no one other than me will have access to this recording and I will be responsible for transcribing this exchange.
2. Second, when we talk today, I will avoid saying your name and when I name the file, I will save it with the pseudonym of your choosing. I will also mask any additional identifying details or details that you ask me to mask.
3. Third, I want to stress that your participation in this study is completely free and voluntary. I only want you to share only what you feel comfortable sharing. You may refuse to respond to any questions, and you may discontinue the study at any time.
4. Fourth, from start to finish, I anticipate that our interview will last 60 minutes.
5. Fifth, I will send you a copy of your transcript in a few days so you can review and send me any changes using the track-change function.
6. Finally, the benefits of this research are two-fold: 1) to better understand your experience as a woman transitioning into the department chair role 2) to gain insights into how key domains related to academic leadership development are influenced by different factors throughout the transition process.

   Do you have any questions?

- Confirm Pseudonym.
- When someone asks you what your job is, what do you tell them?
- Tell me about your department (size---approx. number of faculty, staff and students, etc.)

Details of Transition/Story

- Tell me about the circumstances that resulted in your appointment as department chair?
    - What were the steps in the transition process from when you first found out about the open chair role until you started in the position?
    - What were the motivating factors that led you to this role?
    - When was the first time you ever thought about being a department chair/head?

- Was there anything specific that you did to prepare for the role after you knew you were going to be the new chair?

Impacts

- Has the context of your situation (e.g., being appointed from within the unit or coming in from a different institution) affected your approach to the role?
- Has the transition affected your lifestyle (e.g., your relationships, assumptions, routines, other roles)?
    - Did you expect this level of transition or was it more or less then you expected?
- Many institutions still have a predominate number of male identifying chairs, as a woman department chair, do you feel that there are any differences as to how you are treated, whether it be for dealing with issues in the department, or if you have to deal with family/personal issues
    - Are there any types of things that have come up that you see are different for you from your male colleagues?
    - (If a WOC, are there additional intersections related to your race or other aspects that you feel create additional differences in how you are treated in your role?)

Experience/Resources

- What has helped you transition into this role? Any specific people, resources, or experiences?
- What would have helped you transition into the role? Any resources, people, or experiences?
    - Is there anything you have asked for help with that you haven't received?
- Thinking back on the first few months of your time as a department chair, how has it been going? What have you found most surprising or challenging?
- Can you tell me a story about what has been most affirming/positive in this role?
- Let's switch that up...can you share a story about a day in your role that was a struggle for you?
- When you think about the transition from faculty member to department chair, what are key characteristics or descriptors you would use to describe the experience?
- If the transition was a 1-5 scale, with one representing the start of the transition and five representing a feeling of being fully transitioned, where do you currently feel you are? Why?

- What makes you feel like you have or have not transitioned?
- What would a completed transition look or feel like?

I appreciate you talking with me about this topic. Is there anything that I failed to ask you about? Or is there any question that you think I should add to better understand your experience as you transition into your role as department chair?

APPENDIX D: PROTOCOL FOR SECOND INTERVIEW

Thank you for agreeing to speak with me again. Before we begin, I want to revisit a few items

1. First, no one other than me, will have access to this audio and I will be responsible for transcribing this exchange.
2. Second, when we talk today, I will avoid saying your name and when I name the file, I will save it with your pseudonym. I will also mask any additional identifying details or details that you ask me to mask.
3. Third, I want to stress that your participation in this study is completely free and voluntary. I want you to share only what you feel comfortable sharing. You may refuse to respond to any questions, and you may discontinue the study at any time.
4. Fourth, from start to finish, I anticipate that our interview will last between 75-90 minutes.
5. Fifth, I will send you a copy of your transcript and so you can review and send me any changes using the track-change function.
6. Finally, the benefits of this research are two-fold: 1) to better understand your transition experience into the department chair role 2) to gain insights into how factors related to academic leadership development are influencing this transition

   Do you have any questions or concerns? [pause]. Ok, great, let's get started!

Experience

- Can you share with me how the transition has been going since the last time we met?
- Now that you have served in the role for a year, do you feel you had a good understanding of what the job was you were taking on?
- Could you choose 3-4 words to describe your transition?
- Tell me some stories about the best part of this position (a real highlight) and the worst thing that has happened (a time when you were struggling).
- Last time I asked you to place yourself on a 1-5 scale, with one representing the start of the transition and five representing a feeling of being fully transitioned. You placed yourself at XX place in the transition, where would you place yourself in the transition today? Why?

Support Systems/Professional Development Opportunities

- Tell me about the types of support systems you currently have?
- What skills have you had to rely on the most in your position? Are there any new skills you have worked to develop or want to continue to work on over the course of your next year? Outside of orientation/onboarding activities, what types of professional development opportunities were made available to you after you were appointed chair, and have they helped you with your skill development? OR did you feel you had time to take part in anything?
- Do you have connections with any other fellow chairs, or specifically women chairs?

Reflection/Identity

- I want to ask if you are familiar with the glass cliff metaphor?
    - (Provide overview)
        - Does this glass cliff analogy resonate with your own experience?
- What are you looking forward to in year 2? Or what plans do you have for next year?
- Has your transition experience over the past year affected how you are thinking about future career moves?
- Looking back on the past year, what advice or strategies would you provide to other women preparing for this transition?
- Now I want to switch things up a bit and ask you to provide a visual representation for the last question. Last time we spoke you used some descriptors (refer back here) to refer to your experience. Now I would like you to think back on this year of transition and draw a picture of what this experience has been like for you over the last year.
    - I will give you some time to draw and we will come back to talk through your drawing.

Is there anything that I failed to ask that you think is relevant to this conversation?

If I need to revisit any topics for additional information, are you open to taking part in a short, third, interview?