CHOICES, DECISIONS, AND THE CALL TO TAKE ACTION: A PHENOMENOLOGICAL STUDY UTILIZING BOUNDED RATIONALITY TO EXPLORE COMPLEX DECISION-MAKING PROCESSES

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Abstract

The nascent trends confronting higher education institutions augment the complexity of decision-making among college and university presidents as they internationalize their respective campuses. Internationalization can no longer be understood as a simplistic, linear, cause and effect logic model, with one correct solution. Instead, the complicated nature of internationalization requires higher education leaders to explore multiple outcomes with the understanding that the optimal solution may not be available, thus requiring them to select among satisficing options, and make good decisions based on incomplete information within the context of unknown and dynamic variables. This qualitative descriptive phenomenological study explored the complex decision-making processes inherent to internationalizing college and university campuses and captured the essence of how six college and university presidents describe their experiences navigating the decision-making arena with respect to internationalization. The researcher conducted one-on-one, in-depth, face-to-face interviews with each of the participants, and utilized a combination of semi-structured and open-ended questions. The researcher transcribed the data and employed Giorgi’s (2009) descriptive phenomenological methodology of analysis to write the textual and structural description of the phenomenon, and reveal the essence of complex decision-making. Through the lens of bounded rationality, the findings reveal that complex decision-making evokes strong emotions, and requires college and university presidents to incorporate a combination of strategies and processes as they maneuver through both linear and non-linear paths for acquiring information, seeking alternatives, and making decisions.

Keywords: complex decision-making, internationalization, bounded rationality, descriptive phenomenology
Dedication

I am incredibly excited to dedicate this work to my youngest brother, Robert Carfang. Your compassion towards others, your ingenious perspective on the world, and your fearless approach to life is extraordinary. You continuously maintain a calm and sophisticated presence in all that you do. You hold no judgment and are always receptive to everything that comes your way; you are a true inspiration. It is with immense pleasure that I dedicate this manuscript to you and hope that I too am able to give back and inspire you!

With all of my love,

Your sister.
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Everyone advised me that pursuing a doctoral degree would be a process and I don’t think I truly understood what that meant until September 26, 2014 when I successfully presented and defended my research. At that moment, I realized that the process had worked! However, I could not have done it alone. There were several champions who personally contributed to this process, my success, and who have left a meaningful impact on my development as a scholar, practitioner, and change agent in the field.

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Chapter 1: Introduction

Statement of the problem

The nascent trends confronting higher education institutions (e.g. economic, political, academic, and sociocultural (Childress, 2009), augment the complexity of decision-making among college and university presidents as they internationalize their respective campuses. Within the context of higher education, internationalization efforts are often seen as a response to globalization (Chan, 2004; Coelen, 2008; Friesen, 2013). However, internationalization can no longer be understood as a simplistic, linear, cause and effect logic model with one correct solution. Instead, the complicated nature of internationalization requires university and college presidents to explore multiple outcomes with the understanding that the optimal, or best practice, may not be available, and that higher education leaders may be required to make good decisions that are more appropriate (Snowden & Boone, 2007, p. 3).

Internationalization is a transformative process (Knight, 1994; Schoorman, 1999) that calls for a paradigm shift in an effort to modify stakeholders’ assumptions, underlying principles, and behaviors, and encompasses an international and global mindset (as cited in Childress, 2009). As such, globalization has placed university leaders in a unique role as both key actors, as well as spectators (Edwards, 2007, p. 374), and has given them the opportunity to engage in the complex decision-making processes associated with internationalizing one’s campus in the 21st century. Interestingly, because of the complexity embedded with internationalization, research has shown that there is not a one model fit all approach to internationalizing a campus (Chan & Dimmock, 2008). Moreover, the intricacy of the situation is further compounded by the myriad definitions of internationalization within the literature (Whitsed, & Green, 2013; Marginson & Sawir, 2011). The correlation between terminology and action thus begs the
question that the internationalization process, and the subsequent institutional transformation, may be rooted in the way in which college and university presidents formulate and make complex decisions.

Globalization has changed the way in which colleges operate, placing a significant obligation on institutions to prepare students for a globalized world including:

- develop the ability to compete economically;
- operate effectively in other cultures and settings;
- use knowledge to improve their own lives and their communities; and
- better comprehend the realities of the contemporary world so that they can better meet their responsibilities as citizens (American Council on Education, 2012, p. 3).

Research shows that the internationalization of higher education institutions has become a strategic priority among senior leadership (Bartell, 2003). These initiatives have permeated mission statements (Stromquist, 2007; NAFSA, 2012) and visionary plans (Stohl, 2007; Talburt & Stewart, 1999) across 71% of U.S. higher education institutions (Childress, 2009).

Historically, studies have illustrated the need to provide their graduates with a global mindset, a sense of civic responsibility, and cultural awareness (Childress, 2009). In response to these demands, the phenomenon of internationalization has materialized in a variety of forms such as expanding study abroad programs (McCabe, 2001), developing satellite or branch campuses overseas (Altbach & Knight, 2007), diversifying the student population through international recruitment (NAFSA, 2012), developing bi-lateral or multilateral partnerships with foreign institutions, and integrating a global perspective throughout the curriculum in terms of research, teaching, and service (Jackson, 2008; Bogotch & Maslin-Ostrowski, 2010).
Evidence from the literature point to the multifaceted approaches scholars have taken to understand internationalization (Knight, 2001; van Damme, 2001; Stella & Gnanam, 2004; Deardorff, 2006; Norris & Gillespie, 2009). Higher education institutions are being held accountable for producing “global graduates” (Robson, 2011, p. 622) who are prepared to work in today’s global economy. Public accountability has positioned the internationalization under the microscope, and paved the way for research through the prism of quality (Knight, 2001; van Damme, 2001; Stella & Gnanam, 2004) and assessment (Deardorff, 2006; Norris & Gillespie, 2009). Additionally, other researchers have studied the internationalization through the lens of motivation (Altbach & Knight, 2007; Friensen, 2013), strategy (Harris & Wheeler, 2005, Childress, 2009), and policy (Gul, Gul, Kaya & Alican, 2010), while other seminal authors have explored the opportunities and challenges brought about by these international initiatives (Edwards, 2007; van der Wende, 2007).

The decision to internationalize an organization has been explored through timing and implementation (Middleton, Liesch, & Steen, 2011) of large, medium, and small size enterprises (Musso & Francioni, 2012), and leader behavior (Westaby, Probst, & Lee, 2010), thus portending the question of why do some strategies of internationalization prove to be more successful than others. Within the context of globalization, Middleherst and Woodfield (2007) identify two major trends impacting higher education, noting first, that there is increasing international competition, and second, there are increasing efforts to internationalize both strategy as well as practice (as cited in Robson, 2011).

While internationalization may be understood within the construct of transformative and innovative organizational change (Robson, 2011; van der Wende, 1999; van der Wende, Beerkens, & Teichler, 1999; Rudzki, 1995), and investigated from a variety of perspectives,
(Knight, 2001; van Damme, 2001; Stella & Gnanam, 2004; Deardorff, 2006; Norris & Gillespie, 2009), there continues to be a dearth of research that explores how college and university leaders make complex decisions in the context of internationalization. Because higher education institutions are situated in “an unprecedented intensification of economic, cultural, political, and social interconnectedness” (Jackson, 2008, p 349), what remains unknown is how college presidents arrive at their decisions and the process of how they weigh the various components that become the catalyst to internationalize their institutions. Furthermore, there is a lack of qualitative peer-reviewed studies that address process rather than outcome, and, given the complexity of higher education institutions in today’s global arena, Gordon, Leob, and Tseng (2009) call for a paradigm shift positing that organizational leaders implementing internationalization strategies can no longer view and respond to these internal and external demands from a “silo-based perspective” (p. 301). Therefore, leaders are encouraged to apply a more holistic approach that is inclusive and interconnected with the various and sundry factors embedded within higher education (Gordon, Leob, & Tseng, 2009). By internationalizing not only through strategic plans, missions, and vision, but also, organically, through faculty, administration and student engagement and development, Turner and Robson, (2003) suggest that contemporary colleges and universities implementing internationalization initiatives need to be innovative, and approach decision-making from a more reflexive and collaborative approach whereby university leaders engage in fruitful discourse with their communities in order to develop the breadth and scope of an internationalization agenda (as cited in Robson, 2011).

**Purpose Statement**

The purpose of this qualitative phenomenological study was to explore the complex decision-making processes inherent to internationalizing college and university campuses. This
was achieved by capturing the essence of how college and university presidents described their experiences navigating the dynamic decision-making arena with regard to internationalization. While Snowden and Boone (2007) contend that simple decision-making strategies often times have a single correct answer that call for a straightforward and linear approach through sense-making, categorizing, and responding, organizations that undergo transformational change, such as internationalizing one’s campus, call for more complex decision-making processes. Within a complex decision-making model, there is more than one correct approach to internationalization, thus requiring university leaders to examine the known, and unknown, information in order to arrive at the most appropriate decision (Snowden & Boon, 2007, p. 3).

As internationalization agendas spread across college and university campuses, the number of stakeholders grows exponentially (NAFSA, 2011) thus compounding the multifaceted internal and external drivers institutional leaders must consider as they engage in internationalization activities. Because globalization has drastically altered the way in which higher education institutions operate (Carnoy, 2000, as cited in Carnoy & Rhoten, 2002, p. 5), internationalization can no longer be seen as a simple and desirable consequence to global market forces, instead, it requires a proactive and cognitive approach that becomes a critical component to the suitability of the institution (NAFSA: Association of International Educators [NAFSA], 2011, p. 7).

Higher education executives, administrators, academics, policy makers, community builders, and industry leaders are all impacted by globalization, thus placing an increased emphasis on planning for the future (Selingo, 2013). By exploring the confluence of decision-making, and the nascent trend of internationalization, this study provides insight into the multifarious thought processes associated with the effects of globalization, and the ever more
complex decision-making landscape of the 21st century (Selingo, 2013). As the world is becoming increasingly interconnected, exploring how educational leaders describe their experiences with complex decision-making strategies will assist other leaders across industries in understanding how to navigate the intricate processes to internationalize their department, company, institution, or organization.

Significance of the research problem

The significance of this study is grounded at the local, national, and global levels. In light of globalization, and the expansion of internationalization, there appears to be a need to further understand how college and university presidents navigate the complex decision-making processes to internationalize their campus. Understanding a leader’s cognitive decision-making processes has become an important topic area of scientific inquiry (Westaby et al., 2010), and in the context of globalization, there is a need to understand the factors that underpin an organization’s ability to sustain a competitive advantage in a global market (Casillas, Moreno, Acedo, Gallego, & Ramos, 2009). Johanson and Wiedersheim-Paul (1975) assert, “internationalization is the consequence of a series of incremental decisions” (as cited in Casillas et al., 2009, p. 312), and “the pace and extent of change in today’s global economy provides researchers with the opportunity […] to contribute knowledge that can help organizations shape a more effective future” (Mohrman & Lawler, 2010, p. 43).

In an era where colleges adhere to global market forces, it is important to acknowledge the state of internationalization within higher education at the local, national, and global spectrums. First, looking at the local level, studying the phenomenon of complex decision-making within the context of internationalization, provides insight into how college leaders are enhancing their curriculum and pedagogy to develop global-minded graduates. Within this
setting, it is possible to garner a deeper appreciation for how higher education leaders can internationalize their campuses “at home” (Kehm & Teichler, 2007, p. 265) by drawing upon local resources and expanding not only multicultural and diversity co-curricular programs, but also, by engaging faculty, and adjusting the curriculum with regards to interdisciplinary content and global perspectives (Friesen, 2013).

Second, in an effort to internationalize higher education in the U.S. at the national level, the Simon Act set a goal of having one million U.S. students study abroad by 2017 (H.R. 1469, 2007). In response to this bill, higher education leaders are charged with instilling cross-cultural competencies among their students and preparing their graduates to be “global citizens” (Brustein, 2007). This Act has led to the implementation of the Lincoln Commission which illustrates Washington’s investment in internationalization, and the critical need to create “global citizens who bring their intercultural knowledge into the workplace” (Norris & Gillespie, 2009, p. 383). While a college president may respond to this call to action by expanding study abroad programming, careful and deliberate decisions need to be made as to the strategy (i.e., choosing locations, developing international partnerships, or opening up a branch campus).

Finally, at the global level, expanding an institution’s international reach may enhance enrollment and prestige, propel the reputation of colleges, generate additional revenue streams, and enhance student learning (Coryell, Durodoye, Wright, Pate, & Nguyen, 2012). However, it is worth noting that globalization has had a tremendous effect on education systems worldwide resulting in both linguistic and model convergence (Edwards, 2007, p. 374). Green (2013) perceives these mergers as adverse consequences of internationalization positing that the prevalence of English extenuates linguistic diversity, that the pursuit of a single world-class university model is at the cost of differentiated institutional missions, and finally, the realistic
consequences of “brain drain” (as cited in NAFSA, 2013, p.24).

The significance of this study fills a gap in the existing literature by presenting a qualitative phenomenological study to explore how college and university presidents describe complex decision-making processes as it relates to internationalization. This study offers other university leaders insight into the opportunities and challenges college and university presidents face associated with internationalization, and showcases how a targeted population of presidents describe a particular phenomenon. This research further advances the literature by investigating the phenomenon from a new perspective, with a focus on process rather than outcome, and captures the essence of complex decision-making as described by college and university presidents.

**Positionality Statement**

Writing a positionality statement allows the researcher to reflect and develop an important understanding of how personal values and expectations may influence a study. Therefore, it is important to turn the prism inwards onto myself as the researcher, and acknowledge my biases and social and cultural background that may contribute to the seen, unseen, and unforeseen challenges emerging in my research (Milner, 2007). Creswell (2010) contends, for qualitative research, problems of practice need to be explored in order to obtain a deeper, more significant understanding of the phenomenon. Additionally, as a qualitative researcher, there are certain world view and personal perspectives that intentionally, or unintentionally, play a role in one’s research (Creswell, 2013, p. 74). Therefore, a researcher’s positionality becomes a significant aspect in the way in which a study is conducted and how participants potentially respond (Hopkins, 2007). Although Maxwell (2005) asserts that it is impossible to eliminate all bias from a qualitative research design, by addressing my
positionality, I will be able to obtain a more profound and deeper comprehension of my influences, and use this understanding more constructively throughout my investigation.

**My experience in international education in relations to others.** I never perceived or identified myself as an American until I went abroad. While growing up in the United States, I always considered myself half Italian and half Polish. However, through traveling, studying, working and living abroad for a number of years, I was confronted with the realities that while my heritage may be European, I, myself, am American. I attribute these international experiences to the process of developing a global mindset as it is intertwined with developing a cross-cultural sensitivity towards diverse beliefs, values and attitudes. As such, it was important to evolve from ethnocentric mentality to a lens of cultural realism.

Studying abroad may have been my first exposure to contemplating the notion of self and others. Culture affects learning and shapes the way in which people think, perceive, process information, and interact (De Vita, 2001). This is important to bear in mind as I interview senior management who may or may not have experienced studying abroad themselves, or who have college age children interested in going overseas. While internationalization may be at the forefront of my agenda, it may not be the top priority among senior executives. I will have to be open and understanding of my participants’ perspectives and consider these variables as I conduct my research.

**Career background.** While I was working in the field of international education, I was exposed to risk and institutional liability daily within my profession. My institution, at the time, sent approximately 2000 students abroad annually and my colleagues and I were the first respondents should an emergency occur overseas. Therefore, crisis management and decision-making had become an integral component of my day-to-day work, ranging from health, illness,
and injury abroad, to political unrest, natural disasters, theft, assault, mental health concerns, and sometimes death. All of these potential challenges hold liability and ethical concerns that should be taken into consideration when examining internationalization strategies and protocols and frame the decision-making process. Therefore, these events have led to my interest in exploring how senior leaders navigate the complex decision-making processes associated with internationalization.

**Consequences.** It is important to hone in on the benefits while mitigating, to the greatest degree possible, the challenges associated with my positionality (Maxwell, 2005). Wildavsky and Dake (1990) acknowledge that individuals may be more inclined towards risk-aversion or risk-taking opportunities and note that these personality traits may influence participants’ responses to complex decision-making. While I must critically reflect upon my perspective and selected framework, it is equally important that I consider both the similarities and differences between myself and the research participants (Hopkins, 2007) and be cognizant of not only my positionality, but also that of the participants.

Briscoe (2005) notes that participants may not be willing to open up and disclose information during the interview and data collection processes, with others who are not members of their group. This challenge becomes exacerbated when the researcher comes from a position that is either privileged, or less privileged, in comparison to the participant population (Briscoe, 2005, p. 25). For example, college presidents, may hold a bias towards me being a doctoral candidate holding a middle management position, and not a coequal member on the plane of presidency.

**Overcoming Positionality Obstacles.** Strengthening my role and identity as a researcher is a twofold process. First, addressing my positionality allows me to be mindful of the
ways in which my identity and background influence my research and interactions with participants, but also, how my positionality may also impact my analysis. Second, it is imperative that the participants be able to respond openly during the interviews with minimal bias towards me as the researcher. By recognizing my own influences as it relates to this study, my chosen framework, research questions, methodological design, and data collection, will hold increased credibility and enhance the overall quality of my study.

**Research Questions**

The aim of this study was to explore the complex decision-making processes university and college presidents experience as they internationalize their respective campuses. Therefore, the central question guiding this study is: What are the main characteristics of rational choice among college and university presidents in situations where complexity precludes omniscience? In order to capture the essence of this complex decision-making approach, the following sub questions have been proposed:

**Sub questions.**

- How do college and university presidents describe the complex decision-making processes associated with internationalizing his or her campus?
- How do college and university presidents describe the internal and external factors that influence the complex decision-making process?
- How do college and university presidents formulate complex decisions?
- In what way does the deliberation process of internationalizing one’s campus represent rational choice versus bounded rationality processes?

The researcher chose a qualitative approach as the best method for collecting data because of its exploratory capabilities in an effort to develop an in-depth understanding of a central
phenomenon (Alvesson & Skoldberg, 2009). A qualitative approach allowed the study to evolve, for the possibility of new open-ended questions to emerge, and did not restrict the views of the participants (Creswell, 2010). This approach provided the researcher with a model that allowed her to explore college and university presidents’ decision-making experiences vis-à-vis internationalization.

**Theoretical Framework**

Van der Wende (1999) posits that the internationalization of higher education can be analyzed from various theoretical lenses (p. 3); however, choosing the most appropriate theoretical perspective depends on the purpose of the study (Van der Wende, 1999, p. 3). Higher education institutions are organizations that are multi-level (Klein, Dansereau, & Hall, 1994). Because leaders of these institutions work in dynamic environments, they are presented with complex situations that are often interconnected, spanning the multilayers inherent in the organization or institution (Ackoff, 1998, as cited in Bennet & Bennet, 2008, p.2). Every decision, according to Bennet and Bennet (2008), is a guess about the future, where, if a college or university president takes a particular course of action, or a series of actions, the result will yield the desired outcome (p. 2).

The impact of globalization lends itself to complex decision-making processes and extends well beyond the scope of business and enterprises; it is embedded in the culture of the organization (Jackson, 2008). Globalization has affected social, political, and economical constructs, and, as world economies are becoming more interdependent, students, administrators, and faculty, are recognizing the need to prepare for the hyper connected global world (Anderson, Lawton, Rexeisen, & Hubbard, 2006, p. 458). Kalvermark and Van der Wende (1997) call for a strategy that is a systematically “sustained effort aimed at making higher education more
responsive to the requirements and challenges related to the globalization of societies, economy, and labor markets” (as cited in Jackson, 2008, p. 350). Therefore, it is incumbent upon university leaders to recognize that higher education is experiencing a paradigm shift with regard to the need for preparing and educating global students.

This shift has led to the burgeoning internationalization agendas spreading across college campuses and portends to colleges’ cultural and organizational transformation. Reducing the grand scope of organizational change, to a more manageable focus, the following section presents principles of bounded rationality as the chosen theoretical framework for exploring how college and university presidents are internationalizing their campuses through the prism of complex decision-making. In the following section, the author will describe the characteristics associated with bounded-rationality, define key terms, identify seminal scholars, and address the rationale for selecting this theory as it relates to the aforementioned problem of practice and its application for addressing the driving research questions.

**From Rational Choice Theory to Bounded Rationality**

It is important to understand bounded rationality within the context of other preexisting and related theories (Baucharach, 1989, p. 511). As such, bounded rationality can be situated within the framework of rational choice theory. Rationality is defined as “a style of behavior that is appropriate to the achievement of given goals, within the limits imposed by given conditions and constraints” (Simon, 1972, p. 161). Simon (1979) asserts that rationality becomes bound when it can no longer be considered omniscient and that the two central concepts of the theory lay within the search and satisficing features. Under this umbrella, additional frameworks have emerged noting the behavior of rational choice may be normative or descriptive. Normative and descriptive theory concern themselves with the way in which decisions are
formulated, rather than focusing solely on decision outcomes; these become models of how to make a decision, rather than concepts of what to decide (Simon, 1979, p. 498).

Boundaries based on assumptions are critical because they set limitations in which to apply theory (Baucharach, 1999). Behavioral theorists reject the underlying assumption that people are rational decision-makers where they will seek out all possibilities in order to arrive at the best option, but rather, they work under the conventions of “bounded-rationality, bounded-willpower, and bounded-self-interest” (Posner, 1998, p.1553). For example, risk and uncertainty may introduce parameters that influence the way in which one makes decisions (Simon, 1972). Additionally, a lack of information may pose a considerable limitation on the decision-making process (Simon, 1972) i.e., the realm of the “known unknowns” in the complex decision-making process (Snowden & Boone, 2007, p. 3). Finally, and perhaps most notably, rationality cannot be understood within a global context. In other words, the complexity of a situation may be too large in scope and unmanageable, where the decision-making agent is required to simplify the circumstances in order to drive a realistic scenario to which one is able to arrive at a decision. Therefore, these limitations, Simon (1972) argues, are ones by which the rational decision-making process are bound.

In an effort to compensate for limitations such as knowledge and uncertainties, individuals will seek out information. Leaders will arrive at a decision that is the most optimal based on the collecting information, examining the alternatives, and striving to make the best decision possible. In other words, decision-makers in this model compare the alternatives in a linear fashion until they arrive at the best alternative choice (Conlisk, 1996).

**Additional Features of Bounded-Rationality: Optimizing and Satisficing**

Satisficing and optimizing are the two overarching approaches to rational choice theory.
Satisficing is a practice that sets aspiration levels with regard to problem solving and decision-making by identifying alternatives that are considered to be satisfactory (Simon, 1972, p. 168). Satisficing is grounded in real-life situations and realistic aspirations where by the decision-maker will seek out satisfactory alternatives and continue the search process until the best satisficing alternative is selected (Simon, 1972). While aspirations may start off at an optimizing level where real-world scenarios are over-simplified to a degree that the decision-maker can manage, as the decision-maker continues to examine the alternative choices, the individual may ultimately arrive at a realistic aspiration, yielding a satisfactory response.

On the other hand, optimizing decision-making emphasizes the formal and calculated process involved in evaluating and detecting the best possible outcome, while mitigating as much uncertainty as possible (Simon, 1972, p 171). Research on optimizing and satisficing have highlighted the process of identifying unique solutions to problems, and the various alternatives decision-makers can seek out with nominal effort (Simon, 1972, p. 171). The benefits of this model outweigh other decision-making theories because of its simplistic application to unearth complex matters (Tversky & Kahneman, 1986).

**Application to Research and Rational**

Bounded-rationality allows decision-makers to address a set of underlying assumptions and set limitations for how s/he will discuss the various constructs, variables and values within a pre-established set of boundaries (Bacharach, 1989). Selecting bounded-rationality as the theoretical framework through which the researcher will explore how college presidents make complex decisions with regard to internationalization, will allow her to understand the density of decision-making processes within the context of higher education, and the limitations college presidents encounter when faced with complex situations. Drawing upon the work of Simon
(1972), the central research question became: What are the main characteristics of rational choice among college presidents in situations where complexity precludes omniscience?

Bounded-rationality is an ideal framework because it identifies a fluid approach to decision-making. First bounded-rationality begins with a question, and is followed by searching, framing, identifying alternatives, and finally, arriving at a point where the inquirer is either satisfied with the decision, or has maximized the search and has arrived at an optimal choice. In the context of internationalization, the optimal outcome would be diffusion; “the integration, acceptance, and application of the international dimension throughout the institution in its different units and functions” (van der Wende, 1999, p. 9). More specifically, understanding that arriving at the optimal choice is dependent on the institution’s agenda and the extent to which internationalization can be congruent to the goals of the specific college. Bounded-rationality is aligned with addressing the problem-of-practice because it acknowledges the complexity of globalization and the necessity for university leaders to simplify a global phenomenon and make decisions based on a set of limitations.

Secondly, while internationalization can be materialized on college campuses through a variety of activities, policies, practices, and associated outcomes, a bounded-rationality framework allows the researcher to hone in on the way in which decisions are formulated rather than focusing on a set of results and initiatives. Additionally, in an ever-changing globalized world that provides limitations, higher education institutions will need to make decisions in the context of conflict, ambiguity, and uncertainty “which emphasizes the complications of guessing future consequences” (March, 1978, p. 589). By employing a decision-making framework, the researcher will be able to further discover the various factors that influence an internationalization strategy (Dickinson, 2001). Therefore, it is incumbent upon college and
university presidents to determine the parameters by which they will set policies and create structure for strategy to be implemented effectively (Dickinson, 2001).

Finally, understanding the limitations college leaders encounter when making decisions to educate global students will allow the researcher, and other practitioners and scholars, to understand where university leaders fall on the optimizing and satisficing spectrum, and will contribute to the mature field of decision-making and nascent scope of internationalization. Furthermore, this framework will allow one to foster a deeper understanding of how external constructs such as globalization impact the decision-making process of higher education leaders, and explore whether or not college presidents perceive decisions as a choice bound to global issues.

**Organization of this Study**

This study is divided into five chapters. The first chapter offered an introduction to the research topic and articulated the problem of practice and its significance while also introducing the theoretical framework. The following chapters will present a literature review in order to situate this study within the greater context of existing scholarly work, followed by the methodology for conducting this research. The forth chapter will display the finding followed by a thorough analysis relating the data back to the literature, theoretical framework, methodology and application to both scholars and practitioners. This paper will conclude with recommendations for future research.
Chapter 2- Literature Review

Organization of the Chapter

The purpose of this qualitative phenomenological study was to explore the complex decision-making processes inherent to internationalizing college and university campuses. This will be achieved by capturing the essence of how college and university presidents describe the dynamic decision-making arena with regard to internationalization. College leaders must be cognizant of the opportunities and challenges associated with internationalization in an effort to successfully implement and execute their global agendas. The following chapter presents a review of the literature which situates decision-making within the context of internationalization, and develops a compelling argument that substantiates how higher education institutions are repositioning themselves in a global landscape. By researching the confluence of decision-making and internationalization, this literature review will aid educators, academic and student affairs professionals, and senior leaders in understanding the breadth and scope of how internationalization is changing the way in which higher education institutions operate, and shed light onto how college and university presidents navigate the complex decision-making process associated with innovative practices. Additionally, synthesizing these two bodies of literature, decision-making and internationalization, will offer insight into where additional research may be needed. The organization of this chapter is divided into five overarching sections with various subsections. First, the researcher will offer a synopsis of the decision-making literature followed by a synthesis of the research in terms of internationalization. Next, the researcher will discuss the interconnectivity between decision-making and internationalization, followed by a summation of the reviewed literature. This section concludes with a recapitulation of the researcher’s central and sub questions.
**Decision-Making**

Decision-making, in its broadest context, is one’s individual and organizational commitment to action (Bennet & Bennet, 2008). However, the process by which organizational leaders come to arrive at their commitment to take action, and how their actions are materialized, take on a multitude of forms. Therefore, the following section will explore decision-making by first placing the phenomenon in its grand scope across a variety of disciplines. Secondly, the author will take an in-depth look at the strategies decision-makers utilized, followed by a review of how complex decisions are made. Next the researcher will highlight methodological approaches and theoretical frameworks which have been employed to understand decision-making techniques. Finally, this section will conclude with a summary of the decision-making literature and connect the phenomenon to the nascent scope of internationalization.

**Decision-Making across Disciplines.** Research shows that decision-making stretches across a variety of disciplines from business and economics, to the social sciences, sociology, and psychology (Carnevale, Inbar & Lerner, 2011; Musso & Francioni, 2012; Schweizer, 2012; Reyna, 2004). From a psychological stream, seminal authors such as Carnevale, Inbar and Lerner (2011), Casillas et al., (2009) and Curseu and Schruijer (2012) have led the way in identifying how knowledge, cognition, and rationality influence one’s decision-making process. Through the psychological lens of intuitive belief and choice, Kahneman (2002) has advanced the literature on decision-making by exploring how judgments and decisions are made within a bounded-rationality framework and has identified three major threads: “heuristics of judgment, risky choice, and framing effects” (p. 449). Scholars have expounded on these themes and have suggested similarities with utility theory (Bernoulli, 1978, as cited in Kahneman, 2002) or prospect theory, i.e., framing, editing, and evaluating, (Kahneman & Tversky, 1979, as cited in
Kahneman, 2002). Additionally, other scholars have explored the characteristics pertaining to leadership behavior among decision-makers (Westaby, Probst, & Lee, 2010; Musso & Francioni, 2012); Hadley, Pittinsky, Sommer, & Zhu, W. (2011) as well the ethical factors effecting choices (Stenmark & Mumford, 2011; Elm & Radin, 2012). Alternatively, in the field of business, scholars such as Perks and Hughes (2007), and Schweizer (2012) have investigated how decision-making is applied towards small and medium size enterprises, entrepreneurial ventures, and the impact internationalization has on expanding portfolios across borders (Kester, Hultink, & Lauche, 2009). In response to the dense amount of literature on the mature topic of decision-making, in light of internationalization and globalization, studies have begun to emerge on how risk affects decision-making (Reyna, 2004; Beasley, Clune, & Hermanson, 2005; Nordgard, 2012).

When researching decision-making across various disciplines, two lines of questioning appeared in the body of literature: first, researchers want to understand either how or why a decision is made, or, they were interested in proving a hypothesis and identifying variables that impact decisions made, and the relationship between the coefficients. While qualitative researchers are most interested in uncovering a decision-making process (Schweizer, 2012), understanding the psychology behind decisions (Reyna, 2004), or exploring how information is accessed (Hadley et al., 2011), quantitative researchers approach decision-making by asking correlative questions to investigate whether or not a relationship exists between the amount of information one has and how that impacts the decision outcome (Carnevale et al., 2011). Additionally, one researcher examined the extent to which positions and titles impact decisions (Sullivan, 2011) while other scholars were interested in how intentions positively relate to behaviors by examining whether or not motives are related to intentions (Westaby et al., 2010).
Moreover, in the work of Young, Goodie, Hall, and Wu (2012), the researchers were most interested in understanding the effects time and pressure had on individual choice and behavior. Despite the degree of variance among the decision-making literature, the majority of the seminal scholars were engaging in what Alvesson and Sandberg (2011) refer to as “gap-filling”. That is to say, the researchers seldom challenge fundamental assumptions within the existing literature in any significant way, but rather, expound upon the existing scholarship in order to convey new research (Alvesson & Sandberg, 2011).

However, there are a few researchers, such as Elm and Radin (2012) and Reyna (2004), who have identified and challenged underlying assumptions of decision-making by posing novel and innovative research questions (Alvesson & Sandberg, 2011). For example, ethical decision making theories postulate that it is a unique process that differs from other types of decision-making approaches (Elm & Radin, 2012). However, Elm and Radin (2012) suggest that this assumption may be flawed, and put forth a research question that challenges these underlying assumptions by formulating the following research question: “Do individuals make ethical decisions differently from other decisions they make” (Elm & Radin, 2012, p. 314)? Similarly Reyna (2004) challenges the traditional theories of reasoning and the assumption that human information processing is limited, whereby logic follows a sequential order and suggests that fuzzy-trace theory allows for reasoning processes to unfold in parallel, rather than in series (Reyna, 2004).

**Strategic Decision-Making.** Because decision-making stretches across many disciplines, as evidenced above, one must take a closer look at the strategies by which decisions are made in an effort to understand how organizational leaders arrive at their commitment to take action. This action, according to scholars, holds various meanings; for Drucker, it encompasses a
“purposeful action” whereas Moore (1959) utilizes the term in reference to “design”, i.e., the ideas that emerge prior to the implementation of action (as cited in Mintzberg, 1987, p. 11). Thus, the topic of strategic decision-making has proliferated literature associated with organizational theory and strategic management (Dean & Sharfam, 1996).

Many researchers have highlighted its centrality, noting that the decisions associated with strategic plans and visions shape the organization, as a consequence, resituating strategic decision-making within the context of organizational behavior (Eisenhardt & Zbaracki, 1992). One of the dominate and seminal scholars in the field of strategic decision-making is Henry Mintzberg (1987) who posits that strategy does not encompass a single definition and that the field of strategic management has utilized the term in a variety of fashions. In order to capture the essence of strategic decision-making, Mintzberg (1987) has identified five approaches to strategy and argues that by understanding each of these five concepts, decision-makers are able to develop comprehensive agendas towards strategic decision-making with an emphasis on the organization’s assets and abilities. For Mintzberg (1987), these approaches have been coined the “5-P’s”: plan, ploy, pattern, position, and perspective.

Research on organizational decision-making has identified divergent decision-making models based on the number of variables involved; these models traditionally result in computational, optimizing, or rational decision-making strategies (Pfeffer & Salancik, 1974, p. 135). Many decision-making models have also been applied specifically to strategic decision-making processes such as entrepreneurial, adaptive, and planned (Mintzberg, 1973). Quinn, (1980) has added to the body of literature by adding a fourth model of strategic decision-making in terms of logical incrementalism. Quinn’s (1980) process combines decision-making strategies and implementation as a single cohesive and linear process rather than separate distinct
steps occurring in a non-sequential order. Quinn (1980) has outlined a multistep process which walks the decision-maker through the incremental stages of strategic decision-making:

- the analysis of one’s own situation with regards to strengths, weakness, and competencies;
- a detailed account of future projections or outcomes;
- an analysis of environmental (internal and extern) factors;
- seek target goals;
- identifying alternatives and opportunities;
- develop long term outcomes;
- evaluating implementation and performance (pp. 34-35).

Generally speaking, Quinn’s (1980) logical incrementalism syndicates both rational and systematic analysis with the theories and models found within the organizational behavior and organizational management genre.

In addition, scholars have also approached strategic decision-making from different levels of analysis, i.e., the individual and organizational levels (March & Simon 1958; Simon 1952; Mintzberg 1987; Potter, 1980; Schneider & Shrivastava 1987). Within the scope of individual decision-making processes, researchers have argued that the cognitive ability of individuals require them to adopt a more simplified approach to complex issues, consequently limiting their capability of decision-making (Hart, 1992; Simon 1957; March 1978). In these situations, decision-makers often rely on cognitive maps or schemes in order to organize ideas into a manageable space and arrive at their decisions (Dutton & Jackson, 1987, as cited in Hart, 1992). Alternatively, in the work of Kotler and Murphy, (1981), the authors engaged in a study of how senior leaders navigate the strategic decision-making processes within the field of higher
education. Noting that strategic planning is the link between the organization and the changing market conditions, Kotler and Murphy (1981) have approached strategic decision-making from an organizational level dividing the process into six distinct and linear phases: environmental and resource analysis, followed by, goal formulation, strategic formulation, organization design and systems design. At the organizational levels, decision-makers are bound to strategic assumptions which drive their choices and actions as it relates to their firm (Schneider & Shirvastava, 1987).

The literature on decision-making is closely tied to a rational model, and calls for an inclusive and extensive analysis prior to formulating a decision (Fredrickson & Mitchell, 1984, as cited in Hart, 1992, p. 328).

**Complexity.** Organizations are experiencing an unprecedented rate of change in response to globalization and the sustainability of a firm, or higher education institution, is dependent on how it adapts to such environmental changes and external forces (Schneider, 2002; Mohrman & Lawler, 2012). As the world in which one operates is becoming more complex, Bennet and Bennet (2008) assert that the process of decision-making must change (p. 2). While a decision is a guess about the future where an action, or series of actions, will lead to the desired outcome, in today’s intricate world, the consequences of these decisions are becoming increasingly more challenging to predict (Bennet & Bennet, 2008). In this rapidly changing environment, organizational leaders will need to acquire the most useful information in order for them to effectively adapt to the demands brought about by the global economy (Mohrman & Lawler, 2012). Additionally, as globalization has impacted the way in which organizations are working across various levels, decision-making has become more complex in relation to the number of internal and external components involved (Bennet & Bennet, 2008).
Bruijn and Heuvelhof (1999) found that the number of stakeholders impacted by a decision further compounds the decision-making process because of the variance in interests and objectives. While the foundation of decision-making may be based on rational thought (Hart, 1992), the search and satisficing approaches, which may placate all stakeholders, may not yield the best and most appropriate solutions in the context of complex situations. Contrary to the linear decision-making processes as described by Mintzberg, Raisinghani, and Theoret (1976), Bruijn and Heuvelhof (1999) posit that complex decision-making does not necessarily follow the sequence of identifying a problem and seeking a solution, but rather, it is a process driven by a solution, which is appealing to the various stakeholders involved. According to Bruijn and Heuvelhof (1999) these are solutions in search of a problem (p. 181). Moreover, the non-linearity of complex decision-making continues to be discussed in the work of Reyna and Brainerd (2011). These scholars posit that decision-making involves a dual process approach that occurs in parallel; the decision-maker, in turn, must distinguish between intuition and analysis, or what Reyna and Brainerd (2011) term, gist representation and verbatim as part of their fuzzy-trace decision-making process.

Similar to the logic-based decision models which follow a more serial path, complex decision-making also includes the perceived boundaries innate to human cognition (Bennet & Bennet, 2008). However, one of the differentiating factors between simple and linear decision-making models and complex decision-making strategies is that, in complicated situations, decision-makers must be open to the versatility and continual changing environments in which their decisions are made (Snowden & Boone, 2007). Witte, Joost and Thimm’s (1972) “phase theorem” approach to complex decision-making notes that the outcome depends not only on all of the variables involved, but also, the order in which the problems are solved. The complexity
of a decision is therefore correlated to the number of agents involved, the timing in which the decision needs to be made, and the various internal and external stakeholders the decision impacts (Bennet & Bennet, 2008). In short, the landscape of complex decision-making is one that is filled with “multiple and diverse connections with dynamic and interdependent relationships” (Bennet & Bennet, 2008, p. 2). Therefore, the greater the number of actors (agents, or stakeholders), speed, in terms of timing and implementation, and the non-linearity of the interactions, the greater the complexity is within the decision-making process (Liyanage, 2009).

**Methodological Approaches to Understanding Decision-Making**

Throughout the literature, there were several methodologies employed to understand decision-making. For example, qualitative approaches encompassed an exploratory nature through narrative (Middleton, Liesch, & Steen, 2011), historical (Casillas et al, 2009; Reyna, 2004), and case study techniques (Hadley et al., 2011; Kester et al., 2009; Nordagard, 2012; Perks & Hughes, 2007; Schweizer, 2010). Alternatively, other researchers utilized a quantitative approach to conduct their correlative research (Li et al., 2009; Beasley et al., 2005; Carnevale et al., 2011; Curseu & Schruijer, 2012; Stenmark & Mumford, 2011), meta-analysis (Young et al., 2012), or cross-sectional research (Sullivan, 2011) while, Martinson & Davison (2007), employed a mixed methodology.

**Theoretical frameworks and decision-making.** With the cross-disciplinary approaches taken to understand and investigate how and why decisions are made and under what conditions, there is an extensive variety of theoretical frameworks that were applied to decision-making as well. When looking at how decision-making impacts the comprehensive field of business (international and domestic) Beasley et al., (2005) utilized enterprise risk management as their integrated framework. Przybyla-Kasperek and Wakulicz-Deja (2014) adapted game theory to
analyze conflict in global decision-making systems. Alternatively, other researchers embraced Harrison’s (1996) theory on strategic decision-making (as cited in Musso & Francioni, 2012), risk management (Nordagard, 2012), or bounded rationality and fuzzy trace theories as seen in the research of Reyna (2004). Moreover, understanding the cognition, knowledge-base, and rationality behind decision-making lends itself to a theoretical framework more closely tied to Cacioppo and Petty’s (1982) theory on the need for cognition (as cited in Carnevale et al., 2011), Johanson and Vahlne’s (1990) concept of experienced-based knowledge (as cited in Casillas et al., 2009), and Becker’s (1968) theory of rational choice (as cited in Li, Zhang, & Sarathy, 2009).

The limitations of the studies appeared to be consistent, whether it was a small and homogeneous sample size, or that generalizations could not be made. Alternatively, the studies that used larger samples in order to make generalizations, such as Sullivan’s (2011) research, which surveyed over 1000 university presidents, noted that the surveys were self-reported and there may be some degree of bias within the results. Despite the limitations, all of the researchers contributed to the study of decision-making and offered insightful suggestions for future research.

Some of the theories, such as enterprise risk management, present a moderately new framework applied to decision-making. Therefore, Beasley et al., (2005) have laid the groundwork for future research on which to expound. Several studies also called for a similar approach to their research utilizing an alternative methodology which would provide greater insight into, and understanding of, the results (Sullivan, 2011). Among the literature surveyed, Martinsons and Davison (2007) were the only scholars that attempted a mixed method approach using both qualitative and quantitative practices. Martinsons and Davison (2007) saw a need for
understanding how managers make decisions in different parts of the world and suggest that other scholars should assist in validating their results by replicating their study and selecting alternative countries as the grounds for soliciting participants.

It is worth highlighting that there is nominal overlap in theoretical lenses being used, research questions, analysis techniques, and outcomes. This is part and partial of the intentional methodological fit employed by all of the researchers. Methodological fit is defined as the “internal consistency among elements of a research project” (Edmondson & McManus, 2007, p. 1155). Had there been more closely-tied similarities to addressing the phenomenon of decision-making, it would have pointed to a large gap in the literature.

**In summary.** This section emphasized the breadth and scope decision-making has across the social sciences, and while a mature topic, it still has the ability to be examined from nascent perspectives. The purpose of this section of the literature review was to situate complex decision-making processes within the broader sphere of the decision-making literature, and acknowledge the variety of factors that play a role in how organizational leaders arrive at a commitment to take action. Additionally, it was important to understand how scholars have studied the phenomenon of decision-making in terms of methodology. By having an understanding of the qualitative and quantitative approaches researchers have taken, the researcher has a better understanding of additional areas where future exploration may be needed. Because large and complicated decisions need to be simplified in order for individuals to cognitively process the information and seek out and select appropriate alternatives (March & Simon, 1958), Johanson and Wiedersheim-Paul (1975) contend that the multifaceted nature of internationalization is best understood as the consequence of a series of incremental decisions (as cited in Casillas et al., 2009, p. 312). Accordingly, to set the backdrop for decision-making, the
following section will discuss the literature associated with internationalization and the factors which compound its complexity.

**Internationalization**

The last decade has seen a significant increase in the literature and scholarship concerning internationalization, and considerable attention is being directed toward how higher education institutions are internationalizing (Knight, 2011). Bartell (2003) posits that internationalization lies on a continuum, thus compounding its complexity as it can take on a multitude of forms with several right answers:

“At one end, internationalization is limited and essentially symbolic, for example, […] a handful of students from several distant countries having a presence on campus. At the other end of the continuum, the process of internationalization is conceptualized as a synergistic, transformative process, involving the curriculum, and the research programs that influence the role and activities of all stakeholders including faculty, students, administrators, and the community at large” (pp. 55-52).

Because internationalization significantly impacts the way in which colleges and universities operate, the following section will present the various discussions taking place in the field and address the complexity associated with internationalization initiatives within the higher education arena. The author will first lay the foundation of internationalization in terms of its historical context. Then, she will define terms and definitions followed by a section on the correlation between leadership and transformational change in terms of internationalization. Next, the researcher will identify the various models of internationalization institutions have employed, and then offer a detailed examination of the challenges colleges and universities face.
This section will conclude with a summary of the trends and nascent debates taking place in the field.

**Historical Overview of Internationalization.** Internationalization is not a new concept; it has been utilized for centuries in fields such as political science, government, and international relations (Knight, 2004). Even within the field of higher education, some scholars would argue that internationalization, in terms of student mobility across borders, has dated back to the middle ages (Knight & de Wit, 1995). While the term internationalization may not have been formally utilized to describe what was taking place around the world, the Middle Ages, for example, encouraged students in Europe to cross borders in order to seek knowledge. With Latin as the common language, there was a unified scholarly system that allowed students to not only focus on academics, but also, acquire new experiences, ideas, opinions, and philosophies from their hosting culture (Ridder-Symoens, 1992, as cited in Knight, & de Wit, 1995), this type of student mobility resembles the most familiar form of internationalization one sees in the modern-day study abroad programs, and contributes to students’ global experiences in today’s higher education system.

From the 18th century to the end of World War II, internationalization played a dominant role in higher education. While there was not a one-model convergence among higher education systems, colleges and universities around the world embraced and adopted educational structures from Europe; higher education institutions in India, Africa, and the Caribbean adopted education systems modeled after British and French colonies. Moreover, the first colleges emerging in the United Stated had strong influences and close ties with the Oxford and Cambridge schools of thought. Additionally, Johns Hopkins University emulated its research-based institution after the German system (Knight & de Wit, 1995). Not only were diverse models of education structures
emerging around the world, there was also an exchange of ideas and information through international research publications, forums and conferences. However, there is little empirical and statistical data documenting the number of students and scholars participating in these international initiatives.

Given the economic and political changes taking place in the world during the second half of the 1900’s, international education started to become more formal; non-profit organizations began emerging in the late 1940’s such as the Council on International Educational Exchange (CIEE) which supports peaceful coexistence and respect across nations through the promotion of student and teacher exchange programs (Council on International Educational Exchange [CIEE], 2013). Additionally, other national organizations began appearing such as NAFSA: Association of International Educators, which was founded in 1948 to assist U.S. colleges and universities respond to the influx of foreign students coming to study in the United States following WWII (NAFSA: Association of International Educators, [NAFSA], 2013). Today, NAFSA has grown exponentially and has become an outlet and advocate for all gamut’s of international education. Most recently, the Forum on Education abroad was conceived in 2001, and has laid the groundwork in developing best practices and standards within the field.

As international education has become more professionalized over several decades, there has been an increased need to begin defining and categorizing the international initiatives taking place in higher education. In 1992, the seminal scholars, Arum and van de Water, took on this initiative and proposed that internationalization referred to the activities, programs, and services pertaining to international studies. It wasn’t until the mid-1990’s that internationalization was understood more as a process with regards to integrating a global and intercultural mindset into the way in which higher education institutions operate (Knight, 1994). By the late 1990’s, there
were a multitude of lenses through which internationalization was being discussed. As such, some scholars began to identify limitations to the existing definitions and asserted that an institutional-based explanation precludes external factors. In response to these debates, van der Wende (1997) broadened the understanding and scope of internationalization to incorporate the opportunities and challenges associated with the globalization of civilizations and labor economies, and their interconnectedness within market forces. Despite these external factors, Stohl (2007) perceives internationalization as an internal, pedagogical approach, placing an increased effort on U.S. college and university campuses to internationalize their industry through teaching, research, and service. Embodying both van der Wende’s (1997), and Stohl’s (2007) explanation, Knight (2004) asserts that internationalization needs to be examined not only at the institutional level, but also through the external national prism. Scholars will need to identify parameters in order for internationalization to be understood and assessed, in order to advance the field of higher education (de Wit, 2002). In today’s higher education arena, college and university leaders have increased pressure to respond quickly, make pivotal decisions, and utilize judgment (Nelson & Ornstein, 2002) with regards to how they are internationalizing their respective campuses.

**Definition of Terms.** While a plethora of vernacular has erupted around the concepts concerning global education and how institutions are responding to international markets, it is important to note that globalization and internationalization are not terms to be used interchangeably. Bartell (2003) notes that the term internationalization is an undefined concept and oftentimes misunderstood (Altbach, 2004). This may be because internationalization is a term that signifies different things to different people, and, as a result, is conceptualized within higher education institutions in a variety of manners (Knight, 2004). Globalization portends to
economic factors such as trade, finance, and investment (Bernstein & Cashore, 2000), and, traditionally, may hold negative connotations (McCabe, 2001). Meanwhile, internationalization suggests the cooperation and understanding between two nations or cultures (McCabe, 2001).

The following table illustrates the characteristics of globalization and internationalization according to Waters (2001):

Table 1.1

A comparison of globalization and internationalization

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Globalization</th>
<th>Internationalization</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Ignores existence of nations</td>
<td>Assumes Existence of nations</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rooted in capitalism</td>
<td>Rooted in diplomacy and culture</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Restless force ignoring past structures</td>
<td>Tied to past hierarchies and structures</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>


Although internationalization and globalization have separate definitions, the two terms have a direct, interwoven relationship resulting in planning and practice (McCabe, 2001). While a universal definition has yet to be formally agreed upon, it is important that the researcher and readers of this study have a common understanding of internationalization in order for the complex decision-making as it relates to internationalization can be to be discussed and analyzed (Knight, 2004). After reviewing the literature, the researcher has purposely chosen to employ the most widely cited definition, and understanding, of internationalization, i.e., Knight’s (2003) articulation stating that internationalization is “the process of integrating an international, intercultural or global dimension into the purpose, functions or delivery of post-secondary education” (p. 2).
Leadership and Organizational Change. Globalization has required organizations to undergo an unparalleled transformation in order to compete in the global market economy, as such, it is important to acknowledge the role leadership plays as college presidents discuss their decision-making processes in terms of dynamic and multifaceted environmental factors as it portends to transformational shifts. Porter (1996) posits that leadership is more than an orchestration of operations and management, it places strategy at its center by aligning trade-offs and activities with the company’s unique positioning within the field. The literature on leadership and organizational change is extensive in breadth and scope while spanning across decades, and has become one of the most widely studied topics in the field of management (Schneider, 2002). However, there is nominal qualitative or quantitative scholarship on leadership as it relates to internationalizing an organization and the transformational process colleges and universities undergo. Breckhard and Pritchard (1992) and Kotter (1996; 1990) are a few of the seminal scholars who have discussed the underpinning reasons as to why organizations are required to change. As the higher educational landscape is evolving at an accelerated pace, Santora, Seaton, and Sarros (1999) suggest that, in order to remain competitive and survive in this climate, college and university leaders must respond to, and manage, their changing environments, thus suggesting that a strong correlation exists between organizational change and senior leadership practices. Breckhard and Pritchard (1992) would agree that a relationship exists, and highlights the dual role leadership plays; leaders should not only focus on the process and transition of change, but also, they are called upon to lead the organization as it undergoes such transformation (i.e., implementation). Nadler (1998) addresses the importance leadership plays throughout the change process noting that senior leaders must become ensconced in that process in order to be successful. As the internationalization of higher
education institutions is no longer considered a casuistic, but rather, a systemic phenomenon embedded into the main stream agendas of the institution’s culture impacting all facets of decision-making and administration (Teichler, 2004), college and university presidents must be mindful of the ways in which they are leading their internationalization initiatives on their campus and the decisions they are making to drive those endeavors. While providing a comprehensive review of the existing literature, as it relates to leadership and organizational change is outside the purview of this study, the relevance for addressing leadership in the context of organizational transformation, as it relates to internationalization, is significant because it contributes to the foundation for who the participants will be for this study, i.e., college and university presidents. Additional information on how the participants will be selected will be addressed in Chapter 3.

**Streams of Internationalization.** Internationalization initiatives are not just taking place in the U.S., but are shaping the way higher education institutions operate around the world. What was once perceived as an elite opportunity, higher education leaders and policy makers understand the importance of creating and instilling a diverse and global perspective among students and are paving the way for exchange and study abroad programs to become common place worldwide. Outside of the U.S., student mobility has proliferated across Europe and Asia within the last decade through government support and international frameworks such as ERASMUS, SOCRATES, TEMPUS, and UMAP, all of which support and promote the exchange of students, encourage student mobility, and strive to achieve credit and curriculum standardization.

Interestingly, in a case study conducted by Chan and Dimmock (2008), the scholars identified divergent trends in internationalization agendas within England and Hong Kong.
While the motivation and objectives were similar, i.e., to promote cross-cultural learning, increase student mobility, and attract international students, the authors found the internationalization approaches to be quite different. Mainly stymied by government legislation and cultural attributes, Chan and Dimmock (2008) found that there is not a one-model fit all application of internationalization. For example, in their case study, the U.K. institution was well positioned within the global market and had a strong international profile. Additionally, relaxed government regulations did not restrain the school with regards to the number of international students it was able to admit. Alternatively, the Hong Kong institution was stifled by government regulations which establish the parameters that no more than 10% of its current enrollment could be international students. Furthermore, the particular institution studied held a low global profile thus encumbering its internationalization initiatives (Chan & Dimmock, 2008). Contending that internationalization agendas typically fall within an internationalist or translocalist paradigm i.e., internationalization at home versus abroad, the scholars posit the need for a third framework, e.g., the globalist model (Chan & Dimmock, 2008), thus arguing the need to confront internationalization through a programmatic perspective.

While the work of Chan and Dimmock (2008) is a noteworthy contribution to the field of higher education internationalization processes, providing a global lens as it identifies divergent models and presents a new framework, the aim of this section of the literature review will focus on internationalization streams found within the U.S. By setting this boundary, the researcher will be able to hone in on the discussions taking place within a particular geographic region and thus be able to better align this section of the literature review with her research questions. Therefore, the following section will explore how U.S. colleges and universities are internationalizing their campuses and the contemporary activities taking place to educate and
Internationalizing at home or abroad. Knight (2004) posits that internationalization occurs within two overarching approaches. The first would be internationalizing “at home”, or on the local campus, while the other approach concerns itself with the activities taking place abroad. Within these two categories, “at home” or “abroad”, one can begin to see the various strategies and rationales for how college and university leaders respond to globalization and internationalize their campus.

After reviewing the literature, there appears to be consistent and convergent approaches for how colleges are internationalizing their campus. For example, when engaging in internationalization efforts abroad, colleges tend to offer study abroad and exchange programs, develop international partnerships in an effort to foster faculty mobility and research, and, in some instances, institutions will open a satellite or branch campus overseas. Alternatively, there are methods for internationalizing one’s campus “at home”. This is most often accomplished through internationalizing the curriculum and expanding international student and scholar recruitment.

Study Abroad and student exchanges. While there are a multitude of models of internationalizing higher education, study abroad programs and increasing student mobility have become the best known form (Van Damme, 2001). Between 1960 and 2008 the number of international students studying in foreign countries has expanded from 238,000 to 3.3 million (Organization for Economic Co-Operation and Development, [OECD], 2010). The U.S. alone has increased the number of students studying abroad by 1.3% since 2011 and has more than tripled over the last two decades, see Figure 2.1, (Institute for International Education [IIE], 2012) with the United Kingdom as the number one study abroad destination followed by Italy.
and Spain (IIE, 2012). However, Woolf (2007) asserts that an increasing number of students studying abroad are selecting non-traditional destinations, i.e., countries that are perceived through the U.S. prism as being more “exotic” (p. 503).


**International student and scholar recruitment.** Another form of internationalization taking place at the home campus is through international student and faculty recruitment. Stromquist (2007) posits that internationalization affects academic programs, faculty, and students by way of creating new “structures and privileges” (p. 81). In Stromquist’s (2007) case study, the author found that there were increased recruiting efforts targeting international students and faculty, and noted a “considerable shift among schools in [their] strategies and decisions affecting the issues of governance, curriculum, and selection of both faculty and students” (p. 100). Cudmore (2005) contends that by integrating international students and scholars into a college campus, local and domestic students are able to engage with students of
varying backgrounds, and facilitate a sense of global exchange and community. As such, Blair, Phinney, and Phillippe (2001) note that American colleges have begun increasing their international recruitment initiatives as a way to diversify their student body (as cited in Cudmore, 2005). Strong international recruiting efforts are still taking place today as evidenced in the national Open Doors 2012 report, which highlights a 6.5% increase in international student enrollment into U.S. institutions between the academic years 2010/2011 and 2011/2012. See Figure 2.2. However, Chen (2008) is critical of these internationalization initiatives. In his article, the author pays acute attention to the roles of higher education institutions suggesting that it is no longer providing a public good, but rather, according to Harmon, (2004) “a marketable service industry model … from aid to trade” (as cited in Chen 2008, p. 2).


**International partnerships.** Another manifestation of internationalization is the concept of transnational education (Gopal, 2011). Transnational education can be best understood
through joint ventures between two or more higher education institutions to promote, and transport, academic programs and degrees between one country and another (Gopal, 2011). This stream of internationalization incorporates the expansion of diversity by allowing students increased opportunities to interact with peers in a multicultural setting and create an international learning experience (Greenholz, 2000; Otten 2003).

**Internationalizing the curriculum.** Ardakani, Yarmohammadian, Abari, and Fathi (2011) argue that internationalizing the higher education curriculum may be the most important aspect of how colleges and universities internationalize their institutions at home. This model ensures that students who do not engage in study abroad or exchange programs overseas, are exposed to diverse and international perspectives, leading towards the development of one’s global competence (Peterson & Helms, 2013). In the work of Ardakani et al. (2011), the researchers set out to conduct a comparative study focusing on the USA, Canada, Australia, and Japan, and performed a qualitative content analysis to understand the strategies, plans, and activities utilized by institutions in these countries. The findings across the four geographic regions yielded similar results; the most common strategy for internationalizing the curriculum appeared to be through supplementing international content and perspectives into the existing domestic teaching and learning practices, followed by increasing the number of international faculty to teach native students (Ardakani et al., 2011). These results are aligned with de Vita (2007) who posits that internationalizing the higher education curriculum is typically conducted by either imported or infused approaches. In a study that has reviewed the literature over the past five years, Coryell, Durodoye, Wright, Pate, and Nguyen (2012) found that there have been substantial initiatives led by business colleges to internationalize their curriculum of both public and private institutions in an effort to prepare business students for the global market conditions.
Internationalizing the curriculum is not just taking place at the undergraduate levels either. In a study conducted by Nerad (2010), the author discovered that efforts to internationalize the graduate and doctoral curricula are equally as important. Nerad (2010) asserts that graduate and doctoral candidates operate beyond the academic sphere when conducting research, and, in terms of the knowledge economy, graduate and doctoral students will need to be well positioned upon graduation to be mobile and capable of adapting to unique and diverse work environments around the globe.

Emerging streams of internationalizations. In the nascent work of Knight (2011), the scholar argues that higher education has now reached a third wave of internationalization. Knight (2011) notes the first generation of internationalization is mainly characterized by increased academic and student mobility. The second expansion focused on the development of programs across borders. However, the most recent form of internationalization impacting the field of higher education is the development of “education hubs”. While the term is still loosely defined and additional scholarship will be needed, education hubs “represent a wider and more strategic configuration of actors and activities […] with a concerted and planned effort by a country (or zone, city) to build a critical mass of education/knowledge actors and strengthen its efforts to exert more influence in a new marketplace of education” (Knight, 2011, p. 225). As seen in countries like Singapore, Qatar, and United Arab Emirates, where educational cities are burgeoning, these hubs represent a landscape focused on students, developing a skilled workforce, and the exchange of knowledge and innovation (Knight, 2011).

Additionally, literature suggests that there is not one isolated form of internationalization, and that the definitions and related activities have an extensive reach. As we move into the next decade of internationalization, scholars foresee that:
• Mobility is no longer the purview of students and staff alone but also of programs;
• Driving forces are no longer institutions and national policy makers alone, but increasingly supranational organizations;
• New actors have entered the field, notably international consortia and networks;
• The geographical perspectives have been broadened considerably so that internationalization in higher education has shifted to encompass all regions of the world (Kehm & Teichler, 2007, p. 269).

**Motivating Factors to Internationalize Higher Education.** Rationales for internationalizing higher education, traditionally, have been discussed within four main categories: social/cultural, political, academic, and economic (Knight & de Wit, 1995; Knight, 2004). Additionally, one of the driving forces to internationalize higher education is generated at both the state and national levels. The following section will explore the literature as it relates to the motivational factors that drive colleges and universities to internationalize their institutions.

**Internationalization and policy.** The United States is experiencing an increase in policy and legislation affecting the field of international education. In an effort to internationalize higher education in the U.S., the Simon Act set a goal of having one million U.S. students study abroad by 2017 (H.R. 1469, 2007). In response to this bill, college and university leaders are now charged with instilling cross-cultural competencies among their students and preparing their graduates to be “global citizens” (Brustein, 2007). The implementation of the Lincoln Commission, created by the aforementioned act, illustrates Washington’s investment in colleges and universities’ internationalization agendas and the critical need to create graduates who bring intercultural awareness into the workforce (Norris & Gillespie, 2009).

Moreover, there are numerous financial scholarships available to students to study
internationally. In addition to the Boren award, which offers up to $20,000 in scholarships for students studying in areas of the world that are of particular interest to the U.S., and Benjamin A. Gilman scholarships offered to Pell Grant recipients, national organizations, such as the Council on International Education Exchange (CIEE), and the National Science Foundation (NSF), offer aid and scholarships to underrepresented student groups. This serves to enable study abroad opportunities for minority students, students studying in the science, technology, engineering, and mathematics (STEM) fields, or students interested in studying in non-traditional locations; i.e., outside of English speaking countries and Western Europe. Thus, at the local and national levels there is support and commitment to internationalization and increasing student mobility.

**Competition in the global market.** Knight (2004) acknowledges that colleges have always had some degree of competitiveness with regards to academic standards, and, more recently, to achieve a high international profile. In an effort to gain a competitive advantage both in domestic and international student markets, many institutions have adopted and implemented internationalization strategies (Chan, 2004; Chan & Dimmock, 2008). In accordance with Knight (2004), Chan (2004) and Chan and Dimmock, (2008), Beelen (2011) discovered that internationalizing one’s campus was the third most significant driver among university leaders when planning and executing strategies for increasing an institution’s global reach and profile. Most recently, in 2012, Delgado-Marquez, Bondar, and Delgado-Marquez set out to test whether or not internationalization of higher educational institutions positively influence the school’s reputation and increases its world rankings. Collecting data from the top 50 universities according to the World Reputation Ranking (2011), the researchers compiled information with regards to reputation, internationalization, research quality, and teaching quality (Delgado-Marquez et al., 2012). While research and teaching positively influence an institution’s
reputation and rankings in the global market place, surprisingly, the findings suggest that internationalization does not appear to hold significantly influence. The researchers contribute the lack of correlation between internationalization and rankings to the types of indicators used suggesting that they “do not accurately reflect all of the variables involved in the internationalization process” (Delgado-Marquez et al., 2012, p. 22).

Financial advantages. Miller (1992) developed a framework for categorizing the uncertainties organizations confront internationally, outlining both budgetary and strategic corporate management responses. Internationalization plans allow students to study overseas, thus minimizing institutional expenditures by outsourcing teaching, lodging, and plant operations. Altbach and Knight (2007), identify the realities of generating profits as a strong motivation behind internationalizing one’s college or university. From a financial standpoint, Qiang (2003) posits that global initiatives provide economic enhancements and competitiveness, and promotes “income generated from educational products and services” (p. 255). Davies (1992) associates these opportunities with a cost reduction and an increase in entrepreneurialism that, according to Qiang (2003), “reflects the tight fiscal situation facing universities today and places international activity in the context of revenue-producing work” (p. 252). Moreover, scholars like Burgess and Bergquist, (2012), and Rumbley, Altbach, & Reisberg (2012) also are in accord that internationalization provides another unique avenue in which institutions are able to generate and produce income.

The marketization of higher education has not only led to an isomorphic trend to attract international students and faculty, but also a fiscal competition for funding (Chan, 2004). As U.S. institutions are recruiting the best and the brightest students from around the world, colleges and universities sell themselves as offering educational opportunities that will lead to
employment opportunities upon graduation. Higher education institutions are perceived as vendors where students have become the client and, from the institution’s perspective, the client represents a paycheck (Stromquist, 2007). Therefore, attracting international students to one’s campus renders financial benefits to the institution because international students traditionally pay full tuition and fees. In some cases, institutions may charge foreign students fees that are higher than those charged to domestic tuition rates (Marcucci & Johnstone, 2007).

**Creating cultural and global competencies.** Braskamp, Braskamp, and Merrill (2009), suggest that the most common form of internationalization, i.e., studying abroad, fosters intercultural competency and global development. However, outside of study abroad initiatives, the American Council on Education (ACE) has called upon higher education institutions to promote global and intercultural awareness among its student body. The ACE asserts, “it is the obligation of colleges and universities to prepare people for a globalized world, including developing the ability to compete economically, to operate effectively in other cultures and settings, to use knowledge to improve their own lives and their communities, and to better comprehend the realities of the contemporary world so that they can better meet their responsibilities as citizens” (American Council on Education, 2012, p. 3).

In response, higher education institutions are embedding internationalization initiatives into their agendas as a means for achieving these benchmarks.

**Defining cultural and global competencies.** Challenges emerge as scholars in the field utilize varied terminology pertaining to the attributes associated with intercultural competence. A succinct explanation of what constitutes intercultural competency would provide standardization for measuring specific qualities in student learning assessments. The lack of a
A cohesive definition is due in part to the intricacies related to identifying the specific components of a complex concept.

Deardorff (2006) defines intercultural competence as “awareness, valuing, and understanding of cultural differences; experiencing other cultures; and self-awareness of one’s own culture” (p. 247). Alternatively, Stier’s (2006) demarcates intercultural competence into two categories: content competencies, which includes language, history, or literature, and process competencies, such as situational conditions. Stier (2006) further dissects the process competencies into “intrapersonal and interpersonal” proficiencies (pp. 6-7).

While Braskamp et al. (2009) has identified intercultural competence by measuring intercultural maturity, and intercultural sensitivity, Krajewski’s (2011) work assesses “attitude” and “openness” (p. 138) whereas Hadis (2005) was interested in uncovering “global-mindedness”, “open-mindedness” and “personal and intellectual growth” (pp. 57-61) as the characteristics ascertained through international education. Within each of these definitions, the authors discuss cognitive, emotional, and behavioral attributes and how one’s psychological perspective affects learning outcomes.

In an effort to arrive at a consensus around the evolving definition of intercultural competence and under the nomenclature of intercultural awareness, cultural sensitivity and world-mindedness, Deardorff, (2006) asked leading professionals in the field of international education, top intercultural scholars, and sociologists to participate in a research initiative aimed at providing a more distinct and agreed upon definition of the terminology. Conducting a Delphi study, Deardorff, (2006) provided the participants with an opportunity to deliberate on qualities, characteristics, and attributes of what constitutes intercultural competence. The results of the study illustrated a succinct definition: intercultural competency is “the ability to communicate
effectively and appropriately in intercultural situations based on one’s intercultural knowledge, skills and attitudes” (Deardorff, 2006, p. 248).

**Challenges of Internationalization.** Scholars agree that the internationalization of higher education offers more positive opportunities than perils (Teichler, 2004). However, in an era of increasing student mobility, driving competitive market forces, and global initiatives, higher education leaders must be mindful of the challenges posed by internationalization. While expanding international practices are becoming contemporary goals of higher education, Childress’ (2009) work acknowledges the significant barriers to internationalizing the field.

Miller (1992) contends that challenges to organizations, including higher education institutions, can be both external and internal. According to some scholars, obstacles may emerge in response to environmental factors, and traditionally involves social, cultural, ethical, political, legal, psychological, economic, and technological components (Douglas, 1990; Ewald, 1999). Additionally, Beck, (1992) contends that challenges to internationalization have become individualized, and that risk has developed a capital value; what once was considered misfortune or an accident has now been personified as the “subject of blame” (Starr, 2012, p. 465). However, Wildavasky & Dake, (1990) succinctly uphold that one’s understanding of the challenges brought about by internationalization depends on one’s roles and responsibilities. Therefore, it is imperative to bear in mind that the challenges to internationalizing a college campus will be different at the student, administrative, faculty, and senior executive levels. The following section will explore the literature as it relates to some of the obstacles higher education leaders confront as they aim to internationalize their institutions.

**Transformative change.** One of the most significant challenges to internationalization lies within the transformative change process. Childress (2009) asserts that internationalization
is a process of transformation that requires a paradigm shift which compels university leaders to generate stakeholder’s buy-in and create an institutional culture with an international mindset at its core. While Childress (2009) contends that organizational transformation is probably the most significant barrier to internationalizing an organization, the author also addresses why, higher education institutions, in particular, pose additional challenges. Mestenhauser and Ellingboe (2005) argue that the hierarchal structure of colleges and universities not only needs to be managed during a change process, but also, the vertical silos of departments, offices and units within the organizational chart need to be on board with adapting an international perspective in their daily practices (as cited in Childress, 2009).

**Risk and uncertainty.** When a university leader decides to internationalize one’s campus, there is some level of ambiguity involved in what the outcome will entail and the degree of risk one is willing to take throughout that process (Starr, 2012). Pate-Cornell (1996) asserts that there are two types of uncertainties facing organizations: the aleatory uncertainty, associated with random acts of risk, and second, epistemic uncertainty, grounded in the lack of knowledge. Similarly, Forbes-Mewett (2011) argues that the lack of knowledge and student or faculty preparedness to engage in international initiatives (i.e., programs, research, and collaborations) may increase the probability of risk. While there is a differentiation between the types of uncertainty, Pate-Cornell (1996) posits that in both cases, the “axioms of rationality allow for risk aversion: rational decision makers may be willing to pay a higher risk premium than the expected value of their future losses, to avoid the possibility of very high losses” (Pate-Cornell, 1996, p. 243).

Starr (2012) conducted a qualitative study to investigate how “principals of secondary schools understand risk both in relation to those they serve and in ‘taking risks’ in their role” (p.
While Starr’s research does not directly investigate leaders of higher educational institutions, analogous to Wildavsky and Dake (1990), it emphasizes the importance of who is being asked about what they perceive to be obstacles, and how that person understands, responds, and interacts with such challenges through his or her own lens. As such, one’s response to the challenges and risks involved with internationalizing one’s campus is dependent upon his or her environmental context.

**Reputational challenges.** Colleges and universities with strong reputations are often perceived as providing an increase in value; however, organizations are especially vulnerable to any factors and/or forces that can damage such reputation (Eccles, Newquist, & Schatz 2007). With regards to colleges developing international partnerships, bi-lateral agreements, or memorandums of understanding for study and research, it is critical that the institutions are thoroughly vetted, and held to a level of quality, otherwise, U.S. colleges and universities may be subject to reputational risk if the institution is perceived as poor-quality (McBurnie & Pollock, 2000). An example of this can be seen in the joint venture between Yale University and the National University of Singapore (NUS). Following a few years of internationalization efforts, the two institutions’ joint collaboration fell under scrutiny. Some experts argue that Yale is venturing into unchartered territory, while others have criticized the Ivy League institution for “lending its name to an institution in Singapore, where freedom of assembly and association is restricted” (Gooch, 2009). In order to respond to such threats as manifested through branch campuses, joint ventures, and internationalization initiative, Eccles et al., (2007) suggest five steps to effectively managing reputational risk: “assessing the company’s reputation among stakeholders, evaluating the company’s character, closing reputational gaps, monitoring
changing beliefs and expectations, and putting a senior executive below the CEO in charge” (p. 110).

Additionally, Power, Scheytt, Soin, and Sahlin, (2009) argue, “reputational risk differs in its social construct from other challenges because it is a purely ‘man-made’ product of social interaction and communication” (p. 302). These barriers are dependent upon the degree of control a firm, organization, or institution has over the type of imposed risk, i.e., earthquakes cannot be changed, but, building codes can. Thus, the “legal and regulatory system […] traditionally makes the natural/man-made distinction, whereby affecting the firm [i.e., institutions] to the degree that it influences the firm’s vulnerability to potential challenges” (Pate-Cornell, 1996, p. 241).

**Legal challenges.** Luethge (2004) discusses various challenges university leaders must face as they expand study abroad programs as a dominant stream of their internationalization initiatives. As the number of students participating in study abroad programs increases (IIE, 2012), the duty of care between the institution sponsoring an overseas program and the student, has become an increased legal concern. The concept of the special relationship between the student and the university is based on the foreseeability of harm to a student, and the college or university’s efforts to limit such a possibility from occurring.

Institutional leaders need to know not only how to respond to international risks, but also have a clear understanding of the obligatory and appropriate level of duty of care they are required to provide to their students, thus portending to the various and sundry challenges posed by internationalization. When the college or university plays little or no role in sponsoring an activity, the risk of liability is nominal (Spaziano, 1994-1995; Pearson & Beckham, 2005). However, as colleges and universities have increased their global profile by developing
international partnerships and promoting international opportunities to their students, lawsuits have escalated to the Supreme Courts (see Bloss v. University of Minnesota, 1999; Fay v. Thiel College, 2001; McNeil v. Wagner College, 1998).

**Financial challenges.** While the financial benefits of internationalization have been explored in the work of Davies (1992) and Qiang (2003), Heitmann (2008) argues that the cost of offering international programs is often misunderstood. Brockington (2002) takes an in-depth look at the internationalization efforts of a small liberal arts college and examines the autonomy, authority, and responsibility regarding the institution’s administrative and financial structures. By examining study abroad offices, Brockington (2002) emphasizes the problematic financial structure of tuition discounts as they apply towards international education. Brockington (2002) asserts that tuition discounts are becoming a critical concern because “the cost of study abroad programs must be paid for with real dollars” (p. 287) and therefore, institutions must reallocate financial resources to provide the paper discount in actual monetary form.

**Responses to the challenges.** While reputational, legal, and financial concerns propose significant challenges to the various streams of internationalization, much of the literature places emphasis on one particular factor rather than assessing compound challenges from a multidimensional perspective (Miller, 1992). In response to some of these barriers, Childress (2009) explores the role that internationalization plans play in, and throughout, the organizational and transformational change process. In her research, the scholar discovered that the plan itself acts as a roadmap for change; it becomes a vehicle to generate buy-in among staff, faculty, and administration, it is a tool for expressing institutional goals, a medium for interdisciplinary collaboration and for fundraising. Therefore, offering a plan for internationalizing one’s campus
appears to be a possibility for resolving some of the challenges higher education leaders face when pursing internationalization initiatives.

**On the Quality of Internationalization.** The trend of internationalization has expanded across college and university campuses (Chan, 2004) thus bringing it into a new chapter prompting the necessity to measure its progress and the added value it brings both to the institution and student dimensions. However, because internationalization is manifested in myriad forms, assessing it has become complex and multifaceted. After identifying the need to incorporate a global perspective within the higher education curriculum (Ardakani, 2001; Durodoye, 2012) and instill a level of intercultural competence among graduates (ACE, 2012), the last decade of the higher education chronicle prides itself on developing assessment tools and measuring learning outcomes in response to these endeavors. While Stella and Gnanam, (2004), suggest that educational professionals should perform regular site visits to their partner institutions abroad in an effort to assess the quality of their internationalization initiatives, overseas leaders will also need to measure their internationalization initiatives on the home and local campus. The following section will examine how scholars have begun to assess internationalization initiatives and delve deeper into how internationalization impacts quality within higher educational landscape.

**On measuring internationalization.** Gillespie (2002) posits that while assessment of academic goals occurs regularly, the intercultural goals of internationalization, however, “remain ill defined, inconsistent, and largely unmeasured” (as cited in Anderson, Lawton, Rexeisen, & Hubbard, 2006, p. 458). Empirical studies have explored developing cultural awareness in terms of curriculum integration (Durand, Abel, Silva, & Desilets, 2012), teaching and learning strategies (Cross, Walsh-Brennan, Cotter, Watts, 2008), developing interdisciplinary cultural
immersion programs (Smit & Tremethick, 2012), implementing internships or service learning initiatives, designing cultural studies or comparative educational programs, building offshore campuses (Jackson, 2008) and measuring the relationship between the length of time spent abroad and the intercultural and personal development of the student (Dwyer, 2004). However, as internationalization and assessment take on increased importance, it is vital that educational leaders not only understand the multilevel factors affecting intercultural competencies, but also, be cognizant of how internationalization impacts global and civic-learning, aids in the development of global citizenry, and assess the learning that is taking place among the student body (Knight 2001; Greatrex-White, 2008).

Internationalization strategies have positioned study abroad offices at the forefront of higher education discussions, generating the need to develop assessment tools and produce results that sustain the credibility of international programs and advances the field of higher education in the global arena.

Terenzini and Upcraft (1996) note, “while assessing the purported outcomes of our efforts with students is probably the most important assessment we do, it is seldom done, rarely done well, and when it is done, the results are seldom used effectively” (as cited in Deardorff, 2006, pp. 241-242). In response, numerous longitudinal studies have recently emerged tracking the significance internationalization has on student development.

**Learning outcomes.** Inside Higher Ed. recently published the results of a survey regarding learning outcome assessment. The findings confirm that students who participate in a study abroad program gain a higher functional understanding of cultural practices and cultural context, compared to college peers who did not participate in an international study abroad program (Redden, 2010). Moreover, research suggests that overseas experiences strengthens
one’s attainment of intercultural competencies that are required in today’s workforce (Deardorff, 2006; Norris & Gillespie, 2009) as well as exposes students to new cultural, social, political, and environmental settings that enhance and cultivate intercultural competence. International educators advocate that firsthand immersion in other cultures provides a richer learning experience compared to learning about that culture in a disconnected and abstract manner (Morgan, Mwegelo, & Turner 2002, p. 336). Similarly, Ozolins, Hall, and Peterson (2008), posit that student learning outside of the traditional classroom setting provides additional “depth” while developing the skills needed for lifelong professional development (p. 608).

In a study conducted by Black and Duhon (2010), the authors found that business students who participated in international academic programs experienced an increase in cross-cultural awareness and they highlight the effect study abroad had on students’ flexibility (adaptability) and openness to other people and cultures, perceptual acuity, i.e., awareness of nonverbal social and communication queues, emotional resilience, and personal autonomy.

Similarly, Clarke, Flaherty, Wright, and McMillen, (2009) identified four characteristics garnered through study abroad that drove intercultural proficiency: global awareness, adeptness, openness, and intercultural sensitivity. In addition to the personal growth and intercultural competencies acquired through study abroad, Deardorff (2006) asserts that students also become more globally minded, develop a concern for people of other cultures, and are more likely to engage in international issues.

Moreover, the work of Jiusto and DiBiasio (2006) found that studying abroad provides students with effective communication skills, critical thinking capabilities, and strengthens their self-confidence, thus contributing to the “positive change” students experience upon their return to their home institution (Hadis 2005, p. 57). These positive qualities provide students with the
opportunity to demonstrate independence and refine the skills necessary for life-long learning.

**Duration of studying abroad.** Researchers have begun correlating how the length of the study abroad program contributes to students’ overall acquisition of intercultural competence. In a study conducted at Michigan State University (MSU), researchers set out to assess the impact study abroad has on how students ascertain the knowledge and skills they need in order to live and work in today’s globalized world (Ingraham & Peterson, 2004). By utilizing a mixed method approach, the scholars implemented a pre-and-post-test questionnaire and collected written reports from the students. The participants included students who studied abroad on programs ranging from less than three week stints, up to 14-weeks. The results from Ingraham and Peterson’s (2004) study conclude that personal growth, intercultural awareness, and academic performance increased in relation to the duration of the study abroad program.

Braskamp et al. (2009) contend that a moral, social, and physical development is achieved through studying abroad and the value added by overseas education is demonstrated by students’ critical thinking, their sense of identity, and their ability to engage in relationships with diverse populations. Additionally, data suggests that international educational opportunities have an introspective impact on a student’s intellectual and personal life (Chieffo & Griffiths, 2004). Chieffo and Griffiths, (2004) contend that students who have participated in short-term study abroad programs illustrated high levels of personal growth, development, and cultural awareness. Similarly, Neppel (2005) found nominal change in the cognitive growth, interpersonal skills, and learning outcomes between students who participated in short-term programs compared to those who engaged in long-term sojourns. Neppel (2005) contends that students choosing to partake in short-term educational programs overseas are capable of achieving similar intercultural competencies as those who choose to study abroad for a semester, thus challenging with the
findings in Ingraham and Peterson’s (2004) research.

**The role of civic engagement and internationalization.** The Department of Education (DoE), the Association of American Colleges and Universities (AAC&U), and the Massachusetts Board of Higher Education are calling to action the need to promote civic-learning in postsecondary institutions. The importance of civic-learning is concisely articulated by the AAC&U, stating that graduates need not only retain a “broad knowledge of the wider world through in-depth study in a specific area of interest,” but also, have “a sense of social responsibility, as well as strong and transferable intellectual and practical skills, such as communication, analytical, and problem-solving” (National Leadership Council for Liberal Education and America’s Promise, 2008, p. 14). These objectives are similar to the learning outcomes measured and assessed through internationalization initiatives, thus portending to the correlation between internationalization and civic learning.

Civic-learning, in curricular and co-curricular activities, is intentionally structured to incorporate specific learning outcomes, requiring students to critically reflect upon their experiences (Astin, Vogelgesang, Ikeda, & Yee, 2000). Students’ discovery of their role within society can be greatly influenced by relationships, interactions, and dialogue with others unlike themselves (Keen & Hall, 2009; Astin et al., 2000). Experiences situated in curricular and co-curricular programming, such as study abroad, offer multiple opportunities for student reflection and dialogue with others unlike themselves, and therefore possess the potential to increase civic-mindedness.

**In summary.** The literature on internationalization of higher education has grown significantly over the past two decades, thus showcasing the prominence internationalization plays in the higher education landscape. What once started off as an initiative to mobilize
students across boards, has exponentially grown into integrating a global perspective across the higher education curriculum. Looking beyond the individual level, from students to faculty, colleges and universities have begun to internationalize their institutions from an organizational perspective. The literature on internationalization encompasses assessment and learning outcomes as well as the opportunities and challenges leaders face as they expand their global reach and instill a global and intercultural mind-set within their graduates. While the majority of the studies yield congruent results, additional research will be needed to further explore how senior leaders make decisions to internationalize their campus.

The Interconnectivity between Internationalization and Decision-Making

In order to reconcile perspectives on decision-making and internationalization, additional research is necessary in order to explore how college presidents describe decision-making as it pertains to internationalizing their campus and further understand the components that drive their commitment to such action. International activities have not only grown over time (Olcott, 2009) and changed over the years (Mazzarol, Soutar, & Seng, 2003), but also, the rationales guiding strategic decisions to internationalize an organization have changed with time as well (Knight, 2004). Therefore, it is important to revisit these topics through a contemporary construct that paves the way for new findings with regard to exploring the decision-making process as described by college presidents as they internationalize their institutions.

It is evident that various forms of internationalization are becoming an essential component of the higher education curriculum (Behrnd & Porzelt, 2012) thus requiring institutions to undergo transformational and innovative change (Rudzki, 1995). Stromquist (2007) posits that there is a strong relationship between businesses/corporations and higher education institutions whereby the latter, traditionally, imitates the former. Additionally, Winter,
Taylor, and Sarros (2000) assert that senior managers can confront any challenge by “adopting executive leadership principles and private sector business techniques” (as cited in Rindfleish, 2003, p. 147). By examining the breadth and scope of how companies are responding to the effects of globalization and deciding to internationalize their organizations, higher education leaders will be able to adopt practices and develop a thorough and comprehensive agenda appropriate for their field.

One of the salient topics emerging from this empirical research are the internal and external contributors to internationalization and how these drivers are adding to the complexity of decision-making processes. These factors range from environmental influences (Douglas, 1990) to governmental, political, and organizational constructs (Starr, 2012). Additionally, by addressing the types of challenges to which higher education institutions are exposed, i.e., reputational (Power et al., 2009), financial (Brockington, 2002), and governmental (Chan and Dimmock, 2008), college and university presidents will be able to take a proactive role in responding to these concerns.

As seen throughout legal cases, emergencies and incidents do occur as a result of international initiatives. These cases can bring about great financial strain on an institution as well as yield negative or unwanted public relations. Although an incident can occur thousands of miles away from campus, the ramifications to the host institution can be monumental. Accordingly, as senior leaders implement their internationalization initiatives, they should also simultaneously devise a risk management plan (Miller, 1992) and account for risk as part of their decision-making strategy (Nordagard, 2012).

In order to remain competitive, higher educational institutions will proceed with developing their oversea partnerships and affiliate programming in an effort to better prepare
their graduates to be global citizens, and ready for the workforce. In a global and dynamic world, higher education institutions are confronted with complex choices and college and university presidents will need to develop a cohesive strategy and evaluate their internationalization efforts.

Because of the broad and mature nature in which decision-making has been studied, the literature presented did not yield congruent or incongruent results, but rather, findings that were aligned with the purpose of the researchers’ study. However, a few trends did emerge throughout the review. It can be concluded that there is a relationship between the amount of information one has and how that information impacts decisions. While some managers’ decision-making processes are based on specific characteristics (Westaby et al., 2010), the amount of information they have (Hadley et al., 2011), or their preference towards consensus building (Yang, 2010), Elm and Radin (2012) are the only scholars that suggest ethical decision-making should not be its own genre and that it is no different than any other decision-making processes. Moreover, Martinsons and Davison (2007) were the only researchers to question if the decision-making process is different in other parts of the world. That is to say, through the lens of cross-culture theory, does culture affect how managers make decisions? In an era of globalization, the authors’ seminal work sheds light on the cultural bearing aspects associated with directive, analytic, and behavioral decision-making.

Decision-making can be categorized as a mature theory that “presents well-developed constructs and models that have been studied over time with increasing precision by a variety of scholars” (Edmondson & McManus, 2007, p. 1158). While empirical studies have explored the decision-making process to internationalize an organization in terms of timing and implementation (Middleton et al., 2011), large, medium, and small sized enterprises (Musso &
Francioni, 2012), and leader behavior (Westaby et al., 2010), there is little empirical scholarship on how the decision-making process to internationalize an organization is applied to the complex structures of colleges and universities and the field of higher education as institutions are responding to the demands brought about by globalization.

**Summation**

Insight into understanding the decision-making process with regard to internationalization requires close examination given its complexity and the far-reaching consequences of many of those choices. Internationalization has become a critical component within the higher educational arena (McCabe, 2001; Teichler, 2004; Altbach & Knight, 2007; Stromquist, 2007) and can benefit students by providing them with competitive cross-cultural competencies necessary in today’s global marketplace (Deardorff, 2006; Clarke et al., 2009). This literature review addresses the confluence of external and internal influences regarding decision-making practices and internationalization strategies in higher education. As senior leaders find themselves repositioning their institutions in a global marketplace, internationalization has become a noteworthy, complex, and contemporary trend affecting colleges and universities nation-wide. In an effort to reduce the challenges and maximize the benefits of internationalization agendas, higher education leaders are busy identifying creative and entrepreneurial means for achieving these goals by turning to the corporate sectors. The interconnectivity of decision-making and internationalization renders a multitude of opportunities and challenges, and necessitates innovative solutions within the field of higher education. However, Spencer-Oatey (2013) posits that greater attention and scholarship needs to be paid to the international collaboration process in order to maximize the benefits of internationalization and cross-border academic initiatives.
While examining decision-making across a variety of disciplines yields an abundant amount of information, it allows future researchers to narrow down the scope and determine the context in which he or she will be studying decision-making. As a result, the researcher has chosen to study complex decision-making within the content of internationalization. As evidenced throughout the articles presented, the evolution of decision-making appears to be tied to practice, and falls on the continuum of rational and bounded decision-making models. Mohrman and Lawler (2012) posit “researchers must ask questions with […] practitioners, not about them, and collaborate with practitioners in seeking answers and solutions” (p. 45). For example, because of globalization, and the need to internationalize organizations, literature has emerged on how leaders choose to expand their global portfolio base (Kester et al., 2009), or understanding risk through an intergraded framework (Beasley et al., 2005). The external and environmental factors that influence these choices and practices will continue to be an important part of decision-making. However, as corporations and higher education institutions expand their global reach, logic dictates that the decision-making processes will become increasingly more dynamic in an interconnected and shrinking world. Additionally decision-making will need to be examined through new prisms as a means to add reliable and meaningful scholarship to the mature body of literature and explore how organizational leaders are navigating the complex decision-making processes vis-à-vis internationalization.

The aim of this literature review offers international educators, academic and student affairs professionals, and senior leaders, insight into the preeminent discussions taking place in higher education today, i.e., the nascent development and scope of how leaders are experiencing the decision-making process to internationalize their campus. A thorough analysis of the available literature suggests that financial, reputational, environmental, economic, and quality
factors play a substantial role in the way in which colleges and universities make decisions and manage the internationalization process. Delving deeper into how internationalization is manifested in the 21st century, it has become apparent that there is limited qualitative scholarship on how college leaders make decisions to internationalize their campus and the components that drive those choices. Therefore, it is important to reexamine these topics through a contemporary construct and present new findings with regard to understanding complex decision-making processes.

The limitations of this work acknowledge that internationalization is an evolutionary process and will continue to change, expand, and morph into new initiatives, strategies, and plans in response to a hyper-interconnected world. Additionally, the researcher has presented only the most salient decision-making models as they pertain to the overarching research questions. However, by identifying the most common and relevant themes, this literature review offers perspective on where decision-making and internationalization converge and the impact it has within the higher education platform.

The review of literature highlights several prominent issues that will be addressed by this research study. First, fundamental to this research is the premise that there is not a single model of internationalization (Chan & Dimmock, 2008) and how the leaders of higher education institutions decide to internationalize is largely associated with his or her understanding of the phenomenon and the value, mission and goals set forth by the institution (Knight, 2004). Secondly, while previous research has focused on understanding the motivating factors for internationalizing one’s campus (de Wit, 1995; Knight & de Wit, 1997) and the challenges and opportunities associated with said initiatives, an interdisciplinary approach encompassing the essences of decision-making strategies has not been employed through a qualitative,
phenomenological lens. Third, previous research has had a focus on identifying how college and university campuses are internationalizing (Knight 2004; Gopal, 2011) and the learned outcomes associated with their efforts (Deardorff, 2006; Norris & Gillespie, 2009). However, little empirical evidence correlates the non-linear, complex decision-making models to the internationalization processes. As such, the researcher has identified an area for future study and has put forth the following research questions to drive her study:

**Research Questions**

Formally, this researcher seeks to answer the following central and sub questions:

**Central question.** What are the main characteristics of rational choice among college and university presidents in situations where complexity precludes omniscience? In order to capture the essence of this complex decision-making approach, the following sub questions have been proposed:

**Sub questions.**

- How do college and university presidents describe the complex decision-making processes associated with internationalizing his or her campus?
- How do college and university presidents describe the internal and external factors that influence the complex decision-making process?
- How do college and university presidents formulate complex decisions?
- In what way does the deliberation process of internationalizing one’s campus represent rational choice versus bounded rationality processes?
Chapter 3 - Methodology

Overview of the Chapter

The purpose of this study was to explore how college and university presidents navigate the decision-making process with regards to internationalization. Through qualitative inquiry, the author attempted to better understand decision-making processes through the lived experiences of higher education leaders, and make sense of the components that drove the choices to internationalize one’s campus.

The following chapter offers a qualitative method and descriptive phenomenological approach for executing this study. The author begins by identifying why a qualitative method is best aligned with her research questions. She then proceeds to offer insight into her chosen qualitative research design, guiding paradigm, and descriptive phenomenological research tradition. Next, the researcher provides a detailed description of the participants by outlining how they were recruited, how the researcher gained access to the sites and individuals, and the data collection process. Finally, the author describes how the data was stored and analyzed, followed by a strategy for ensuring credibility and trustworthiness of the results. This section concludes with how the researcher ensured the protection of human subjects.

Methodology

The objective of this study was to foster a deeper understanding of how a particular population of individuals experienced a central phenomenon (Alvesson & Skoldberg, 2009; Creswell, 2012). The researcher chose to employ a qualitative approach in order to explore themes that could not be easily measured (Creswell, 2013), such as the experiences of senior leaders as they make complex decisions vis-à-vis internationalization. A qualitative method allowed the researcher to “learn about the views of individuals” through rich and detailed
accounts of their lived experiences in terms of decision-making as it relates to internationalization, and brought to light what may not otherwise be explicit (Creswell, 2012, p. 12). Therefore, a qualitative approach was selected in order to investigate the following central and sub questions:

**Central question.** What are the main characteristics of rational choice among college and university presidents in situations where complexity precludes omniscience? In order to capture the essence of this complex decision-making approach, the following sub questions have been proposed:

**Sub questions.**

- How do college and university presidents describe their complex decision-making processes associated with internationalizing his or her campus?
- How do college and university presidents describe the internal and external factors that influence the complex decision-making process?
- How do college and university presidents formulate complex decisions?
- In what way does the deliberation process of internationalizing one’s campus represent rational choice versus bounded rationality processes?

The researcher chose qualitative inquiry as the best methodology for answering the central and sub questions for a variety of reasons: First, the exploratory capabilities of a qualitative research design was ideal because it allowed the researcher to develop an in-depth understanding of the phenomenon (Alvesson & Skoldberg, 2009). Secondly, a qualitative approach enabled the study to evolve, and account for the possibility of new open-ended questions to emerge. Finally, this approach did not restrict the views of the participants (Creswell, 2010). Therefore, the culmination of these characteristics was best suited to answer
the central and sub questions, and will provided the researcher with a model that allows her to garner a deeper understanding of complex decision-making in terms of the changing landscape of higher education.

Research Design

A qualitative design allowed the researcher to derive meaning from college and university presidents’ lived experiences with regards to complex decision-making. While Chan, (2004) asserts that the trend of internationalization emerging on college campuses is in response to the effects of globalization, and is a “defining feature of all universities” (Rudzki, 1995, p. 421), a qualitative study offered the researcher an opportunity to expound upon the complexity of how higher educational institutions are responding to the global higher education arena, and offer a detailed account of how higher education presidents navigate the decision-making process to internationalization their institution.

Paradigm and the role of the researcher. A constructivism paradigm was applied to this study to complement the qualitative approach and assist in answering the aforementioned research questions. Constructivists, “holds that reality is constructed in the minds of the individuals [the college and university presidents], rather than it being an externally singular entity” (Hansen, 2004, as cited in Ponterotto, 2005, p. 129). Thus, it is through the interactions between the researcher and the participant that meaning unfolds and is extrapolated through deeper reflection and understanding (Ponterotto, 2005).

Reality, according to constructivist thought, is subjective and is “influenced by the context of the situation, namely the individual’s experience and perceptions, the social environment, and the interaction between the individual and the researcher” (Ponterotto, 2005, p. 130). As such, this paradigm aids in answering the research questions because it allowed the
participants to elucidate their experiences, within their own realities, and sheds light on their decision-making process within their contextual, social, and physical environment. Additionally, because multiple meanings can emerge in the minds of the individuals who have experienced a common phenomenon, the role of the researcher neither attempted to “unearth a single truth from the realities of participants, nor tried to achieve outside verification of [her] analysis” (Ponterotto, 2005, p. 130). Through this paradigm, the role of the researcher is critical in capturing and exploring the lived experiences of the college and university presidents because of the subjective relationship between reality and its social constructs. While Ponterotto (2005) posits that the researcher’s values cannot be removed from the process, bias should be acknowledged, and placed aside, but not entirely eliminated. Therefore, adopting a constructivist’s paradigm to this qualitative study best positioned the researcher to dig deeper and answer the central and sub research questions.

**Research Tradition**

In order to investigate how college presidents experience the complex decision-making process to internationalize their campus, the author selected a descriptive phenomenological approach for her study. Phenomenological research acknowledges that there is a need for understanding a phenomenon and, in an effort to understand and improve our own practice, Lindseth and Norberg (2004) assert, that “we have to start with our lived experiences” (p. 148); by uncovering the meaning within one’s daily life, researchers will be able to discover and implement improvements (Lindseth & Norberg, 2004). Because complex decision-making is an abstract phenomenon, and cannot be explored directly, it is through open-ended questions and in-depth, one-on-one interviews with participants who have experienced making complicated decisions in terms of internationalization, that the researcher was able to induce meaning
The following section will provide an historical overview of the research tradition, contrasting perspectives, and rationale for why descriptive phenomenology was best suited for this study.

**Historic overview and key theorists.** Phenomenology has evolved over the last century, portending to the emergence of new phenomenological approaches. It has transitioned from a philosophical practice, to one grounded in psychology and scientific methodology. While originally associated with German philosophers such as Kant or Hegel, Husserl became known as the modern-day founder of phenomenology (Dowling, 2007). Since Husserl, there continues to be seminal scholarly advances to the practice of phenomenology; these specialists have expanded the platform from hermeneutical phenomenology, existential phenomenology, and interpretive phenomenology (Dowling, 2007), to what has become known as American phenomenology (Caelli, 2000).

Phenomenology continues to be critiqued, scrutinized, and defended. Theorist have expounded upon the work of Husserl, making nuanced adjustments to the various aspects and approaches of the methodology. While these various and sundry methodologies have commonalities rooted in the traditional sense, Caelli (2001) has identified substantial nuances and has categorized 18 divergent forms of phenomenology. The overarching reason for these shifts appears to be grounded in the philosophical debate concerning the role of the researcher and how the data is analyzed. Therefore, it is not surprising that one of the most common assumptions novice researchers make with regards to phenomenology, is that the qualitative approach is one sole method, and interchangeably employ mixed techniques such as hermeneutic, descriptive, or grounded theory into a singular study (Englander, 2012). Laverty (2003) posits that the goals of the study, from data collection and subject selection to the
understanding of the lived experience, may be similar across the varying genres of phenomenology, it is the position of the researcher, the data analysis process, and the steps for ensuring rigor or credibility, that can be vastly different (p. 28). Therefore, it was incumbent upon the researcher to identify one approach and/or a single methodologist, within the phenomenological tradition that was best aligned with her questions (Giorgi, 2008). Through the examination of these varying perspectives, and a review of the phenomenological literature, it became evident that descriptive phenomenology, as illustrated by Giorgi, (2008) was the best approach for answering the guiding research questions because the researcher was most interested in understanding how the participants described their experiences within the context of a shared phenomenon.

**Descriptive phenomenology.** Van Manen (2007) posits that phenomenology of practice involves a unique way of understanding the world; contrasting this model against theories that “think” the world is a particular way, practitioners “grasp” the world (p. 20). Giorgi’s (2012) descriptive application is pre-transcendental and focuses on “how human consciousness relates specifically to the human world” (Giorgi, 2012, p. 10). Within the scope of this study, phenomenology uncovered “possibilities for creating formative relations between being and acting, between who we are, and how we act” (van Manen, 2007, p. 13).

Phenomenology involves a detail-orientated examination of the participants’ reality (i.e., life-world), as it attempts to explore personal experiences regarding the individual’s perception or account of the phenomenon under investigation (Smith & Osborn, 2007). Husserl (1970) advocates that the “life-world” (as cited in Dowling, 2007, p. 132) refers to the individual experiences of the participants in their daily setting. Within one’s natural setting, and, understating one’s experiences in relation to the common phenomenon, Husserl asserts that the
“aim of phenomenology is the rigorous and an unbiased study of things as they appear” (Dowling, 2007, p. 132).

Unlike alternative forms of phenomenology, descriptive phenomenology recognizes that the account of the phenomenon needs to be described exactly as it appears. Descriptive phenomenology provides a deeper understanding of lived experiences by making evident the taken-for-granted assumptions of the phenomenon (Starks & Trinidad, 2007), and allows the researcher to adopt an understanding of how the phenomenon presents itself to the participants’ consciousness. Therefore, the consciousness becomes the “medium between a person and the world” (Giorgi, 2012, p. 6). In other words, it is through the in-depth and one-on-one interviews with the participants who have lived through the phenomenon, that the researcher was able to understand complex decision-making. By setting aside any preconceived notions and past knowledge of decision-making as it relates to internationalization, the researcher was able to mitigate a biased attitude towards her research which allowed her to absorb everything she can about the decision-making processes as if it were presented to her for the first time. According to Giorgi (2012), by setting aside these “non-givens” i.e., past knowledge, the researcher was able to concentrate on the “given”, i.e., everything that the participants articulated about their lived experiences associated with the decision to internationalize their institution.

Rationale. Descriptive phenomenology was the most appropriate research design for this study for a variety of reasons. First, Lopez and Willis (2004) and Swanson-Kauffman and Schonwald (1988) assert that “descriptive phenomenology is appropriate for inquiry that aims to discover universal aspects of a phenomenon that were never conceptualized or incompletely conceptualized in prior research” (as cited in Wojnar & Swanson, 2007, p. 177). By employing a descriptive phenomenological methodology to this study, the researcher had the necessary tools
to explore how college presidents described the decision-making process vis-à-vis internationalization, and explore the lived experiences of the participants as they navigated the multidimensional, complex, and changing landscape of higher education in a globalized context.

Secondly, phenomenology can be utilized as an approach for understanding “complex issues that may not be immediately implicit in surface responses” (Goulding, 2005, p. 301). Given the breadth and scope of how globalization, and in particular, its manifestation in the form of internationalization, is impacting the higher education landscape, it has become increasingly important to augment quantitative data by offering a qualitative approach to uncover how senior leaders make decisions in this complex environment.

Additionally, phenomenology lent itself to an understanding of the lived experiences among participants and provided the researcher with an opportunity to explore how this particular population experienced the phenomenon of complex decision-making embedded in internationalization strategies. Moreover, phenomenological research provided an angle through which additional meaning and a deeper understanding of decision-making can be captured in order for college presidents to make improvements with regards to how they are positioning their institution in the 21st century.

**Pre-Data Collection Processes**

Groenewald (2004) asserts that researchers are often overwhelmed by the numerous methodological options for conducting research. One of the characteristics of the phenomenological approach is its precise application, detail, and structure, thus allowing the researcher to follow a prescribed and formatted methodology. Drawing upon the work of Giorgi (1997; 2008; 2009), the following section will present a thorough and detailed description of who the participants were for this study, the strategies employed for recruiting the participants,
the sample size, and how the researcher obtained access to her participant base.

**Participants.** Miles and Huberman (1984) assert that identifying one’s sample in qualitative research requires two central components: First, the researcher needed to determine boundaries by which she will be studying a particular phenomenon. Secondly, the researcher created the frame by which to “uncover, confirm, or qualify the basic processes or constructs that undergird [the] study” (p 27). In order to understand the lived experiences of higher education leaders in regards to a central phenomenon, the participant base will consist of college and university presidents.

**Population as it relates to phenomenology.** The initial step in data collection begins with the selection of participants (Englander, 2012). Because the data collection and data analysis need to be congruent in order to yield effective results and achieve rigor (Englander, 2012), the researcher turned to the leading theorist of this study, Giorgi (1997; 2008, 2009; 2012), who suggests that the selection of participants within qualitative phenomenological study should be guided by a systematic, methodological, general, and critical approach (Giorgi, 1997; 2009).

The selection process is of particular interest because it aids in bringing credibility to the findings (Englander, 2012, p. 18). Willis (2004), and others (Starks & Trinidad, 2007) assert that the researcher will need to identify the common lived experience of the participant base so that general descriptions can be categorized and essences revealed in order to represent the truest nature of the phenomenon. This shared familiarity portends to the possibility of having “qualified and nuanced discussions about the essential meaning” of the phenomenon under study (Lindseth & Norberg, 2004, p. 147). According to Maxwell (2005), “selecting individuals who can provide you with the information that you need in order to answer your research questions is
the most important consideration in qualitative decisions” (p. 88). Therefore, the question qualitative phenomenological researchers have to ask themselves when identifying participants is: Do you have the experience that I am looking for? (Englander, 2012, p. 19). This practice contributes to the value of the external validity by showcasing the relationship between sampling protocols and findings (Englander, 2012). More information regarding validity will be described later on in this chapter.

**Sampling Strategy.** In accordance with the phenomenological approach, this study utilized a purposeful sampling technique in order to answer the research questions and understand the central phenomenon (Creswell, 2012; Creswell, 2013). The phenomenon and central and sub questions drove not only the research method, but also dictated the sampling strategy for selecting the most appropriate participants (Hycner, 1999 as cited in Groenewald, 2004, p.3). Therefore, in order to identify higher education leaders who have experience with complex decision-making processes inherent to internationalizing their college or university campus, the researcher employed a critical sampling technique.

Critical sampling allowed the researcher to identify exceptional cases (Creswell, 2012) where colleges and universities have excelled in their internationalization efforts. By selecting institutions with this reputation, the researcher had an opportunity to learn as much as possible about the phenomenon under investigation (Creswell, 2012). Under the guidelines of critical sampling, and, the purpose of this study, the researcher selected her sample based on the individual’s leadership role within the organization as a means for dividing the population (Creswell, 2012). More specifically, the level of analysis will be at the individual level whereby the criterion for selecting participants is as follows:

- Participants will consist of college and university presidents.
The researcher drew from institutions that have been recognized for their internationalization efforts by adhering to one, or more, of the following requirements:

- A commitment to internationalization as articulated in the institution’s mission and visionary statements.
- A commitment to internationalization by demonstrating a high percentage of students who study abroad, or, by the percentage of international students studying at the U.S. institution, based on Institute for International Education’s (IIE) Open Doors Reports.
- A recipient and/or nominee of the NAFAA: Association of International Educators -Simon Award for Comprehensive Campus Internationalization.
- A recipient and/or nominee of the “Senator Paul Simon Spotlight Award” for a specific international program or initiative that contributes to comprehensive internationalization.
- A recipient and/or nominee of the Institute for International Education (IIE) Heiskell Award for Internationalizing the Campus.
- An institution that has set up branch or satellite campuses and/or operations across borders.

Sample size. The sample size in qualitative research continues to be a topic of debate (Englander, 2012). Kvale, (1994) argues that researchers should interview as many participants as necessary until the researcher finds out what he or she needs to know (as cited in Englander, 2012). Alternatively, Polkinghorne (1989) quantifies the sample size, asserting that participants
in phenomenological research range between 5 and 25 (as cited in Creswell, 2013, p. 81). However, Englander (2012) argues that the question of “how many” participants one interviews becomes irrelevant, contending that this is a phenomenological qualitative study not a quantitative investigation. As such, if the goal of this phenomenological research is to achieve a level of understanding by extrapolating the essence of a central phenomenon by interviewing participants and learning about their unique and individual experiences, then, it is safe to assume that this could be achieved from a small sampling. Giorgi, (2008), asserts that the minimum number of participants should not be less than three, arguing that a smaller sample size makes it easier to discern the unique and individual experience from the more general understanding of the phenomenon (as cited in Finlay, 2009, p. 9). Because qualitative research aims at uncovering the lived experiences among the participants, the researcher studied a small sampling consisting of six college and university presidents (Miles & Huberman, 1984; Giorgi, 2008, 2009).

**Recruitment and Access**

**Recruitment.** The researcher recruited college and university presidents by utilizing two primary techniques. First, the researcher sent formal letters to college and university presidents describing the nature of the study and why the particular president has been selected based on the institution’s engagement to internationalize their campus (see Appendix A). Secondly, the researcher followed up with all university presidents by email and/or phone call to further explain the context of the research and answer any questions the potential participants may have (see Appendix B and Appendix C). The researcher sent out 18 letters to university and college presidents acknowledging that some may consider to not participate in the study.

**Access.** Qualitative studies require the researcher to gain access and permission to numerous sites in order to collect data (Creswell, 2013). For the purpose of this study, the
researcher received six responses from college and/or university presidents who agreed to participate in her study. The researcher was then able to organize access to six institutions by working collaboratively with the administration within the President’s Office to coordinate dates, times, and access for collecting data. In line with the process outlined within a phenomenological study, the researcher “obtain participants’ written permission to be studied” (Creswell, 2013, p. 154). To maintain the confidentiality of the participants, the formal consent form which appears in Appendix D is unsigned but provides an example of the consent that was requested. Finally, the researcher will identified “key informants” or “gatekeepers” (Creswell, 2013, p. 94) within each institution in an effort to secure access to the site and the participants. These gatekeepers included the president’s secretary, administration, and/or faculty within the participating institutions.

Data Collection and Analysis

The following section will discuss the data collection and analysis for this phenomenological study. While the data collection and data analysis have been divided into two separate segments, what the researcher is about to describe is a repetitive process that takes place during both the data collection and data analysis phase. To set the background, in a phenomenological study, there is a detailed sequential methodology the researcher must follow (Giorgi, 2008; 2009), and, ensconced within this process, the researcher will continually bracket her bias in order to choose the relevant assumptions, and privilege what is unique to the phenomenon. The following figure depicts this process in its broadest and simplest state:
Data Collection.
Assuming the correct attitude. The first phase in the data collection process was for the researcher to assume an attitude that encompassed a phenomenological reduction (Giorgi, 2012). Reduction is an instrumental component of phenomenology that allows the researcher to investigate the phenomenon through “transcendental subjectivity, eidetic essences (universal truths), and the lived-world plane of interaction” (Wojnar & Swanson, 2007. p.174). In order for the researcher to maintain an open attitude, she needed to bracket herself from preconceived notions of the phenomenon during the data collection process (Norlyk & Harder, 2010).

Descriptive phenomenology, according to Finlay, (2009) is most interested in describing the phenomenon rather than explaining it. As such, phenomenologists “aim to reveal essential general meaning structures of a phenomenon [and] stay close to what is given to them in all its richness and complexity” (Finlay, 2009. p.10). Therefore, the role of the researcher, in a descriptive phenomenological study, is to describe the phenomenon as accurately as possible,
detaching herself from any pre-given ideas (Groenewald, 2004), and to concentrate on “everything that is said about the phenomenon” (Giorgi, 2012, p. 5).

**Memoing.** In order to achieve the correct and open attitude, one of the techniques the researcher engaged in involves a series of journaling, or the practice of memoing, whereby, the researcher sets aside as much bias and pre-conceived notions as possible. Memoing is a significant aspect of data in qualitative research study (Miles & Huberman, 1984). This bracketing technique is an ongoing step throughout a phenomenological study that allowed the researcher to preserve a balance between descriptive and reflective notes such as hunches, ideas, and emotional states which emerged throughout the data collection and analysis phases (Groenewald, 2004; Creswell, 2012). By documenting descriptive, reflective, and theoretical notes throughout the various phases of this study, the researcher was able to acknowledge and mitigate her own bias as much as possible. For example, this researcher began the memoing process prior to conducting interviews and gathering data so that she was able to accept her own predispositions towards complex decision-making and internationalization, and hold them at bay throughout the study. Additionally, memos consist of reflective notes as well as field notes taken by the researcher recording what was heard, seen, and experienced (Miles & Huberman, 1984), therefore, this technique allowed the researcher to document her thoughts and feelings prior to, and immediately following, the interviews, as well as throughout the data analysis phases (Corbin & Strauss, 2008). This is a practice the researcher employed in order to provide credibility and ensure the trustworthiness of her study. Credibility and trustworthiness will be later discussed in this chapter.

Moreover, the process of reduction allowed the researcher to treat the information that was given to her as data presented to her consciousness. This required her to refrain from
assuming that complex decision-making in terms of internationalization was actually the way it appeared (Giorgi, 2012). Because the application of phenomenology is scientific in nature, a psychological phenomenological reduction was employed and further utilized, and described, in the data analysis process.

**The interview.** Once the phenomenological reduction has occurred, the researcher was ready to embark on the second phase of the data collection process, the interview. In order to adhere to the phenomenological approach, the researcher conducted one-on-one, in-person interviews which ranged between 45 and 90 minutes as the main technique for collecting her data (Englander, 2012); all interviews were recorded on an Olympus Digital Voice Recorder. During the interview, Kvale (1996) asserts that the researcher is literally seeking an “inter-view, an interchange of views … where [the] researcher attempts to understand the world from the subjects’ point of view” (as cited in Groenewald, 2004, p. 4). During the interview, the individuals were asked to describe, in as much detail as possible, their experience in relation to the phenomenon being investigated (Laverty, 2003), i.e., the researcher asked college and university presidents to describe in thorough detail, their lived experiences of navigating complicated decisions in terms of how they were internationalizing their respective campuses. Often times, the researcher encouraged the participant to discuss the topic with as little prompting as possible. Bentz and Shapiro (1998) remind researchers that within the phenomenological methodology, they must allow the data to emerge (as cited in Groenewald, 2004). Smith and Osborn (2007) contend that this approach allows the interviewer to “get as close as possible to what [the] respondent thinks about the topic, without being led too much by [the researcher’s] questions” (p. 61). However, in order to be prepared during the interview data collection process, the researcher developed an interview protocol with semi structured and
opened-ended questions followed by prompts which are more explicitly framed should the participant need additional encouragement in answering the interview questions (Smith & Osborn, 2007). Additionally, within the context of a qualitative and phenomenological methodology, new questions emerged based on how the participants’ respond to the initial line of inquiry and do not appear within the interview protocol. Within the context of descriptive phenomenology, it is important to bear in mind that it is the phenomenon which is the object of investigation, and not the participants (Englander, 2012); hence, it is through the participants’ articulation of internationalization that one is able to foster a deeper understanding of how complex decisions are made.

Since the researcher employed a descriptive phenomenological methodology to her study, Giorgi, (2009) posits that it is imperative for the researcher to phrase the interview questions within the context of a situation in which the college or university president has experienced the phenomenon. Placing the interview questions within the context of a situation becomes a critical characteristic in phenomenological research; therefore, it is acceptable for the situations to vary among participants (Englander, 2012). As such, one of the first questions that was asked during the interview was: Can you please describe, in as much detailed as possible, a situation in which you experienced having to make a decision related to internationalization. A copy of the interview protocol can be found in the Appendix E.

**The role of the researcher during the interview.** Phenomenology operates with an understanding of the subject-subject and the subject-phenomenon relation. As a phenomenological researcher, it is essential to maintain these relationships and understand that the participants are individuals who describe their experiences, having lived through the phenomenon under exploration. Phenomenology provides the researcher with the means to
transition between various modes of consciousness throughout the interview process, oscillating between subject-subject and subject-phenomenon lines of questioning. According to phenomenological scholars, the role of the interviewer in conducting opened-ended and, on occasion, semi-structured interviews, is to “facilitate and guide, rather than dictate exactly what will happen during the encounter” (Smith & Osborn, 2007, p. 63). Moreover, Giorgi, (1997) suggests that open-ended questions allow the participant a sufficient opportunity to provide his or her perspective, and elaborate upon the phenomenon being studied. While a step by step prescription of a phenomenological interview protocol does not exist, Giorgi (2009) recommends that the researcher seek “as complete a description as possible of the experience that a participant lived through” (p. 122). By conducting in-person, one-on-one, in-depth interviews with college and university presidents, the researcher was be able to gain deeper insights into how these leaders described their lived experiences in the context of how they navigate the decision-making process with regards to internationalization.

**Transcriptions.** Once an interview was conducted, scholars encourage researchers to transcribe the interview recording within one week as the content is still fresh in the mind of the researcher. Giorgi (2009), in particular, takes the transcription process one step further and suggests that the report be rewritten from first person into the third person. The reason for this additional step is to assist the researcher on focusing on the subject-phenomenon perspective which will be required during the analysis phase. Therefore, the researcher incorporated this step into her practice; she transcribed all of her own recordings within 48 hours of conducting the interview and edited the text from first person to third person.

**Potential second interview.** Should there have been content which needed additional investigation or clarification after transcribing the raw data and reflecting on the text, the
researcher could have chosen to schedule a second in-person interview lasting between 30-45 minutes. However, this step was not applicable in this study.

The following table outlines the timeframe for which the data collection and data analysis took place.

Table 3.1.
Timeline for data collection and analysis

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>What</th>
<th>When</th>
<th>Duration</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Obtain IRB Approval</td>
<td>February 2014</td>
<td>2 weeks</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Recruit Participants</td>
<td>March 2014</td>
<td>3 weeks</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Schedule and Conduct Interviews</td>
<td>March – May 2014</td>
<td>3 months</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Transcribe Data</td>
<td>March – May 2014</td>
<td>Within 48 hours of conducting the interview</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Data Analysis</td>
<td>May – July</td>
<td>3 months</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Data Storage. In order to protect all participants and adhere to the guidelines as outlined by the Institutional Review Board (IRB), the researcher ensured participants’ confidentiality by utilizing pseudonyms for all persons, names of institutions, and locations. Once the data was collected, the researcher uploaded digital audio files to a secure password protected computer file on the researcher’s home computer, in her home office. Additionally, the researcher maintained paper documents such as notes, memos, journals, and transcriptions in locked and secured file cabinets within the researcher’s home office. It is important to store files in secure locations as well as ensure that there are backed up copies (Creswell, 2013). As such, the researcher developed a master list as well as a data collection matrix to easily file, store and sort the information (Creswell, 2013). The researcher also backed up her files on an external hard drive.
within her locked home office. The researcher will have sole access to the raw and stored paper and electronic files. However, in order to ensure that the findings are reliable, the researcher may share the data with her primary and secondary doctoral advisors, as well as her external third reviewer. These precautions enabled the researcher to protect the identity and confidentiality among the participants. Finally, the files will be destroyed after five years, thus ensuring that no harm is done to the participants and that the utmost respect, and confidentiality, is maintained.

**Data Analysis.**

**Phenomenological reduction.** In parallel to the data collection process, the first step of the data analysis process requires the researcher to achieve transcendental subjectivity and “assume the correct attitude” (Giorgi, 2012, p. 4). Because the analysis is intended to be descriptive and psychological in nature, the researcher acquired a “psychological attitude towards the data” (Giorgi, 2012, p. 5) and incorporated a “special sensitivity towards the phenomenon being investigated” (Giorgi, 2012, p. 5). This was attained through the researcher’s continual assessment of her biases, thus allowing her to neutralize any perceptions so that they did not influence the analysis of the phenomenon (Lopez & Willis, 2004). According to Lindseth and Norberg, (2004) the shift towards the phenomenological attitude requires the researcher to refrain from asking judgments about the factual, and engage in the process of epoche´ or bracketing (Lindseth & Norberg, 2004), thus setting aside biases and prior knowledge of the phenomenon. Husserl believed that through the bracketing, or the reduction process, it would become possible to garner insight into the similar aspects of any lived experience among the participants (Wojnar & Swanson, 2007).

After the correct attitude was achieved, the researcher read through the data in its entirety before engaging in the analysis. Giorgi (1997) makes this step explicit in his process, arguing
that the phenomenological approach is holistic and requires the researcher to obtain an overview of the information before moving onto the second phase of analysis.

**Delineating units of meaning.** The next step involves “delineating units of meaning” (Groenewald, 2004, p. 6). This critical phase explicates the data by making a notation on the transcription every time the researcher experiences a shift in meaning. According to Giorgi, (2012), this is the process of constituting parts; because the raw data descriptions were lengthy, creating shorter units of meaning helped in the analysis process. While these parts alone carry no theoretical value, they are descriptive terms that are closely associated with the attitude of the researcher at the time of analysis (Giorgi, 2012). This data analysis phase evidences the imperative need for the researcher to continually assess her bias, and ensure she maintains the correct mentality throughout the analysis process.

**Structural analysis and expression.** After the units of meaning have been scrutinized, and redundant units eliminated (Moustakas, 1994), the researcher was able to cluster the units of meaning, transform the data into expressions, and add a psychological value to elicit their significance. During this structural analysis phase, and, in an effort to capture the essence of the lived experience, the researcher created condensed descriptions in order to convey meaning within the data (Lindseth & Norberg, 2004).

Giorgi (1997) posits that one cannot simply use the common language of the participants, because initial meaning units are derived from the participants’ everyday perspective and do not yet hold any significant value. From the phenomenological vantage point, the realities of the “life-world” are still pre-theoretical and it is through the examination of the meaning units, and the process of re-describing the various clusters, that a theoretical application can be applied.
**Essential structure.** The final phase in the data analysis process was to revisit the newly captured expressions and extrapolate the essence of the phenomenon. Through free imaginative variation, the phenomenological researcher was able to determine what information was essential to maintain in order to understand the phenomenon under investigation, and what information could be discarded (Giorgi, 1997; Giorgi 2012). The goal of the analysis was to reach a level of understanding by developing integrated statements about the experience (Laverty, 2003). Additionally, the analysis aimed at transforming what was implicit, to the explicit, by assigning a psychological value (Laverty, 2003; Giorgi, 2008) and creating a narrative in order to explain the data. This aspect of the transformation is what allows the analysis “to reveal meanings that are lived but not necessarily clearly articulated” (Giorgi, 2008, p. 35).

To conclude, the main attributes of a phenomenological analysis include research that is “rigorously descriptive, uses the phenomenological reductions, explores the intentional relationship between persons and situations, and discloses the essence, or structure, of meaning eminent in human experiences through the use of imaginative variation” (Finlay, 2009, p. 7).

**Reliability and Credibility**

Qualitative analysis, according to Starks and Trinidad (2007) is inherently subjective because the researcher becomes the instrument for analysis and makes the judgment calls in terms of identifying meaning units, clustering or categorizing the meaning units and reassembling the data. While there is an agreed upon consensus that qualitative researchers need to demonstrate credibility, validity, and trustworthiness (Creswell, 2013), without explicitly identifying a study’s “authenticity”, “true value”, or “dependability” (Lincoln & Guba, 1985), Morse, Barrett, Mayan, Olson, and Spiers, (2002), posit that this lack of rigor would render the research worthless, fictional, and devoid of utility. As such, seminal scholars have developed
detailed criteria for establishing the rigor of a qualitative study (Miles & Huberman, 1984; Lincoln & Guba, 1985; Merriam, 2009).

Creswell and Miller (2000) assert that there are traditionally two choices researchers make which govern the credibility procedures: the lens and the paradigm. Qualitative paradigms are based on interpretation, and, ontologically speaking, there are multiple realities or truths that can be conceived based on one’s perception (Sale, Lohfeld, & Brazil, 2002). While Merriam (2009) asserts that reliability occurs when “research findings can be replicated” (Merriam, 2009, p. 221), conversely, post-modern qualitative scholars challenge the concept of consistency in data analysis positing that “the researcher’s analysis bears no direct correspondence with any underlying ‘reality’ and different researchers should be expected to offer different accounts” (Armstrong, Gosling, Weinman, & Marteau, 1997, p. 599).

Armstrong et al.’s (1997) perspective supports the phenomenological methodology since the units of meaning were precisely associated with the researcher’s assumed psychological attitude at the time she was analyzing the data. Therefore, the process by which the researcher has chosen the participants, and in turn, the transferability of the sample population, became paramount in securing the credibility of this study.

**Strategies.** In order to support the credibility and reliability of a qualitative research study, Creswell (2013) and other scholars (Leedy & Ormrod, 2005; Merriam, 2009; Creswell & Miller, 2000) offer several strategies this researcher could employ in order to minimize potential threats to the credibility of the research being conducted such as member checking, triangulation, peer reviews, thick descriptions and external audits, contending that the researchers may choose one or a variety of these strategies (Creswell & Miller, 2000). However, it is important to acknowledge the techniques the researcher chose in order for her study to be reliable and aligned
within the context and scope of the phenomenological research tradition. The following section will address the process and protocol this researcher took in order to ensure the quality, reliability, and credibility of her study as deemed appropriate in relation to her descriptive phenomenological research (Giorgi, 2009).

**Internal Validity.** Internal validity methods refer to the extent to which the research design, and the generated data, provides a platform for the researcher to draw conclusions (Leedy & Ormrod, 2005, p. 97). Maintaining a congruent practice grounded in a phenomenological method throughout all stages of the data collection and data analysis, lent itself to ensuring internal validity. Some scholars advocate that the intricate requirements demanded by a phenomenological research design alone, gives credence to the phenomenological study (Groenewald, 2004). For example, the prescribed methodology embedded into the analysis phase required the researcher to identify the essential structure, which was a thorough examination of meanings and expressions in order to determine which units were significant with regard to the phenomenon. This technique lent itself to the validating process of “disconfirming evidence” whereby the researcher searched for disconfirming, or negative evidence (Creswell & Miller, 2000) which was not central to the investigation, and discarded. This approach required the researcher to rely on her own lens and constructivist style by examining all of the multiple perspectives captured in the data collection and analysis processes (Creswell & Miller, 2000).

**Debriefing and peer review.** Lincoln and Guba (1985) assert that the debriefing which takes place during the peer review process supports the credibility of the data and provides a means towards establishing trustworthiness vis-à-vis the findings. Debriefing involves a review of the raw data by others who are familiar with the study and this “openness,” according to Chenail, (1995), is critical, because it allows the reader to “be presented with both the process
and the results of analysis … and judge the validity of one’s efforts” (p2). Typically, the reviewer is someone who is familiar with the phenomenon and plays “devil’s advocate” (Creswell, 2013, p. 251) by challenging the researcher, asking tough questions, and encouraging her to reflect and deliberate on the process employed. The researcher will rely on her primary advisor and doctoral committee as the peer reviewers for this study.

**Researcher reflexivity.** Additionally, researcher reflexivity is a process which allows the investigator to “self-disclose their assumptions, beliefs, and biases.” The researcher’s positionality became a significant aspect in the way in which the study was conducted, and how participants responded (Hopkins, 2007). Although Maxwell (2005) asserts that it is impossible to eliminate all bias from a qualitative research design, Moustakas (1994) notes that in a phenomenological study, the researcher will “set aside their experiences, as much as possible, in order to take a fresh perspective toward the phenomenon under examination” (as cited in Creswell, 2013, p. 80). By the phenomenological reduction process, or “bracketing” one’s previous understanding of the phenomenon, the researcher was better positioned to detach herself as much as possible from any pre-given, or pre-conceived notions (Groenewald, 2004), the researcher was able to concentrate on all of the details which were said about the phenomenon during the data collection process (Giorgi, 2012). Additionally, the researcher has been and will continue to be transparent throughout her research regarding her role as the researcher (Moustakas, 1994; Creswell & Miller, 2000). Researcher reflexivity utilizes the “lens of the researcher but is clearly positioned within the critical paradigm where individuals reflect on the social, cultural, and historical forces that shape their interpretation” (Creswell & Miller, 2000, p. 127).
**Thick, rich description.** Thick, rich description was another procedure that was utilized for determining reliability in qualitative research, and is most applicable in descriptive phenomenological research designs. Because this practice relies on in-depth, thorough and detailed descriptions, the reader will be left with a feeling that he or she has experienced an event, phenomenon, or situation (Creswell & Miller, 2000). Descriptive phenomenology requires the researcher to solicit in-depth detailed accounts of the lived-experiences of the participants in relation to the phenomenon. As such, the researcher assumed a constructivist perspective to contextualize the phenomenon under investigation (Creswell & Miller, 2000).

**Member Checking.** Finally, given the purpose and intention of a phenomenological methodology, Giorgi (2008) contends that a phenomenological researcher should not engage in member checking and ask the participants to confirm interview transcripts, units of meaning, and the essential structure. Giorgi (2008) acknowledges that the participants “are surely privileged when it comes to what they experienced, but not necessarily concerning the meaning of their experience” (p. 6).

**Reliability and credibility within phenomenological research.** It is worth noting that there remains a dearth of documented reliability and credibility criteria, as it pertains to phenomenological research (Creswell, 2013; Giorgi, 1985). Creswell (2013) asserts that the closest protocol he has found is best articulated by Polkinghorne (1989) who states that validation “refers to the notion that an idea is well grounded and well supported” (as cited in Creswell, 2013, p 258). Polkinghorne (1989) then proceeds to identify five rhetorical questions that phenomenological researchers should ask:
Did the interviewer influence the contents of the participants’ descriptions in such a way that the descriptions do not truly reflect the participants’ actual experience?

Is the transcription accurate, and does it convey the meaning of the oral presentation in the interview?

In the analysis of the transcriptions, were there conclusions other than those offered by the researcher that could have been derived? Has the researcher identified these alternatives?

Is it possible to go from the general structural description to the transcriptions and to account for the specific contents and connections in the original examples of the experience?

Is the structural description situation specific, or does it hold in general for the experience in other situations? (as cited in Creswell, 2013, p. 260).

**Protection of Human Subjects**

Creswell (2013) posits that qualitative researchers encounter many ethical challenges throughout the data collection and fieldwork processes. In an effort to address these ethical dilemmas, it is incumbent upon qualitative researchers to adhere to the rules and regulations outlined by the Office for Human Research Protections (OHRP) in order to protect the “rights, welfare, and wellbeing of subjects involved in research conducted or supported by the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services” (Office for Human Research Protections [OHRP], 2013). To assist in this process, colleges and universities have developed Institutional Review Boards (IRB) to ensure that researchers follow overarching principles such as respect for persons, beneficence, and justice (Creswell, 2012). In order to gain approval from the IRB, the
researcher has outlined the following protocol to ensure respect for the participants, maximize the possible benefits of the research while minimizing possible harms, and secure both individual and societal principles throughout the study (Protecting Human Research Participants, [PHRP], 2013).

First, maximum consideration to ensure ethical research was given in order to safeguard the protection of human subjects. Rubin and Rubin (2012) contend that the primary ethical obligation to one’s participants is to “do them no harm and to keep promises you have made” (p. 89). This was achieved through obtaining the necessary informed consent from all of the participants. It was understood that this consent was an on-going process and not solely a one-time legal procedure (PHRP, 2013). These forms addressed the following criteria as outlined by Creswell (2013):

- The right of participants to voluntarily withdraw from the study at any time;
- The central purpose of the study and the procedures to be used in data collection;
- The protection of the confidentiality of the respondents;
- The known risks associated with participation in the study;
- The expected benefits to accrue to the participants in the study (p. 153).

A thorough and detailed description of the data collection process was presented to the IRB as well as information pertaining to how the data was secured within a password-protected database, backed up on other secured devices, and deleted after the research has been completed in order to protect the identity of the participants. While the researcher will be able to share broad examples of the interview questions, Rubin and Rubin (2012) assert that the nature of
qualitative research lends itself to a conversation between the investigator and the respondent, thus, additional open-ended questions which do not appear in the interview protocol reshaped the dialogue. Therefore, the qualitative researcher has caveated the interview protocol appendix, noting that that the exact wording of the interview questions differ as a result of the nature surrounding qualitative research. Furthermore, in order to maintain respect for the participants, the interviewer understood that she will not pressure individuals to answer any questions that he or she may feel uncomfortable discussing, and that any form of coercion and undue influence will not be present (PHRP, 2013).

Finally, in order to gain approval from the IRB, the researcher identified the participants and sites to the best of her ability, noting that participants and locations may evolve throughout the course of the data collection process. Additionally, in order to protect the participants’ identity, the researcher will remove all names from the study and use pseudonyms. By addressing these various ethical concerns the researcher aimed at mitigating any apprehensions the IRB may hold.

Conclusion

The purpose of this study was to understand the lived experiences of university and college presidents as they navigate the decision-making process inherent to internationalizing their campus. Globalization has changed the higher education landscape and the way in which institutions operate (Knight, 1994). The trend of internationalization has expanded across college campuses (Chan, 2004), and while the phenomenon has been investigated from various vantage points in terms of motivational factors (Altbach & Knight, 2007), financial benefits (Qiang, 2003), and student learning outcomes (Deardorff, 2006), among others, this researcher proposed a study that will dig deeper into understanding the underlying components that drive
the decision-making process. While past scholarship has focused on what is implicit with regards to the phenomenon, the aim of this study was to elicit meaning from what may not otherwise be obvious to the phenomenon at hand. Through the theoretical lens of bounded rationality (Simon 1972; March, 1978), the researcher was be able to understand where on the satisficing and optimizing spectrum college and university presidents formulate decisions. Additionally, descriptive phenomenology offered the most appropriate methodology for understanding the lived experiences of college and university presidents as they navigate complex decision-making processes to internationalize their institution and a qualitative research design provided the best approach for answering the central and sub questions.
Chapter 4 - Report of the Research Results

The purpose of this study was to explore how college and university presidents navigate the complex decision-making process with regards to internationalization. Through qualitative inquiry and a phenomenological research design, the author attempted to better understand complex decision-making processes through the lived experiences of six higher education leaders, and make sense of the interconnected components that impact choice. The individual one-on-one, in-depth interviews provided a rich description of the participants’ experiences as they made complicated choices related to internationalizing their respective institution. The interviews revealed the unique experiences of each participant and shed light onto the nuanced processes of complex decision-making. Following a precise and rigorous methodology as outlined by Giorgi (2008), and described in detail in Chapter 3, this chapter will present the four major themes and 12 subthemes which emerged as a result of an in-depth phenomenological analysis. The chapter begins with a recapitulation of the data analysis process, followed by a textual narrative description of each of the participants, an in-depth structural review of the data, and concluding remarks.

Explanation of Data

The data analysis process began with the researcher acquiring the proper psychological mindset through a series of phenomenological reduction. After the phenomenological attitude was achieved, the researcher read through the data in its entirety before engaging in the analysis. Giorgi (1997) makes this step explicit in his process arguing that the phenomenological approach requires the researcher to obtain an overview of the information before moving onto the next phase of analysis.
The second phase involves “delineating units of meaning” (Groenewald, 2004, p. 6). According to Giorgi, (2012), this is the process of constituting parts, and it is essential to the explicating of the data and the creation of smaller, more manageable statements (Groenewald, 2004). Assuming a psychological perspective when reviewing the data suggests a degree of delimitation; the researcher does not view the data equally, but rather, she is interested in the meaning units which potentially reveal the most psychological richness to elicit meaning (Giorgi, 2009). Therefore, the researcher is called upon to make a significant amount of decisions while actively bracketing her own beliefs in an effort to refrain from subjective judgments (Hycner, 1999; Groenewald, 2004; Giorgi, 2009). During this phase, the researcher identified a total of 318 meaning units.

Throughout the review of the data, several meaning units appeared to be similar which portend to the interconnectivity of the emerging major and minor themes. However, the similar meaning units carried different psychological weight and/or chronology thus confirming their unique attribute to the essence of the phenomenon (Hycner, 1999). After the meaning units were scrutinized, and redundant units eliminated (Moustakas, 1994), the researcher clustered the meaning units into categories and transformed the data into expressions; these expressions added a psychological value to elicit significance. During this structural analysis process, and, in an effort to capture the essence of the lived experience, the researcher created condensed descriptions in order to arrange the data and disclose meaning (Lindseth & Norberg, 2004).

After the individual analysis was done, a composite was created in an effort to identify commonalities across the six participants and arrive at the essence of the phenomenon. This analysis aimed to transform what is implicit, to the explicit, by assigning a psychological value
(Laverty, 2003; Giorgi, 2008) and creating a narrative in order to explain the data. The following section provides a descriptive narrative of the six participants.

**Participant Profiles**

**Stephen.** Stephen is the president of a private research university in the U.S. When Stephen accepted his appointment, it was clear to him that his institution had a global perspective, both in terms of the overarching strategy, as well as the daily operations. This global perspective “was really a strength in the university and [we] wanted to make sure that this was true going forward.” Throughout his time as president, it became clear to Stephen that the university was engaged in several international initiatives, and through strategic planning, implementation, and resources allocation, these ventures could be better coordinated. In an effort to support the university’s global agenda and strengthen coordination, Stephen allocated a portion of the institution’s strategic plan to address these needs.

For Stephen, engagement with the university community was a priority. Stephen enjoys attending events, being visible, and listening to the feedback, concerns, and suggestions from the stakeholders. Through a variety of methods such as town hall meetings, open forums, focus groups, and retreats, Stephen was able to connect and collaborate with faculty, staff, students, trustees, parents, and alumni, about the future of the institution, and the shaping of the strategic plan. Stephen’s approach to decision-making and implementation was innovative; he was not afraid to try something that had never been attempted before, to seize opportunities, and to experiment. However, Stephen was routinely confronted with the “problem of balance,” which required him to elevate the strategic plan to the “right level of description”, thus empowering departments, divisions, and the administration to interpret the strategic plan, and use it as a guiding framework moving forward.
**Jerry.** Jerry is the vice president of a small private research institution in the U.S. Jerry’s outlook on internationalization is that his institution should “have a presence, and be engaged in all major regions of the world”. Although a U.S. based institution, his school has a global reach, and strives to build capacity through its commitment to “developing innovative economies”. Because of the institution’s strong international rankings, Jerry frequently receives requests to collaborate and to build international partnerships, from colleges and universities from around the globe. Given the high volume of inquiries, Jerry acknowledges the challenge of sorting through all of the invitations and being able to strategically identify meaningful relationships. For Jerry, these daily complex decisions are “tricky” and therefore, he incorporates a delicate balance of both top down and bottom up management approaches until a middle-ground is met.

At Jerry’s institution, global opportunities and collaborations have become available through a variety of strategies including faculty initiatives and research interest. Other international partnerships have developed more serendipitously. Jerry understands the balance that is required to oversee a university of students and faculty and perceives himself as a facilitator; someone who is there to lead by creating pathways, opportunities, and offer direction. However, Jerry is mindful that it is ultimately the faculty and the students who will need to take ownership and “become the primary movers” of the institution’s global agenda.

**Rich.** Rich is the president of a religious college in the U.S. Rich’s personal experiences played a significant role in the way in which he internationalized his campus. As an undergraduate, Rich had the opportunity to study in Europe. This experience gave Rich an opportunity to understand “first-hand, the benefits of international education” and has made him a “firm believer in study abroad”. When Rich reflected on the initial state of his college with regards to internationalization, he noticed that “there were some flags”, and that his college was
“not doing the things you need to do” compared to peer institutions. This realization became a catalyst for how Rich internationalized his campus.

Rich’s description of complex decision-making, as it relates to internationalizing his campus, was “a success story”. With a student-centered mindset, Rich and his team were able to strategically mitigate the impediments that were preventing students from taking advantage of the global opportunities offered through the college. For Rich, it was a matter of trying to break down barriers and “make it easier for students to go abroad”. As such, Rich embarked upon several international initiatives; in some instances, “there was no push back” from stakeholders, while in other cases, Rich described the negotiating process like fighting in “World War II”. However, part of Rich’s success story can be attributed to the cultural transformation that occurred on campus. Rich asserts that it is no longer a question of if students are going to go abroad, but rather, a query of where they have decided to go.

Margo. Margo is the president of a small private niche institution in the U.S. When Margo accepted her appointment, she quickly found out that the global initiatives taking place at her college were not as centralized as she had originally thought. As Margo was discovering the numerous ways in which her college was engaged in international activities, she found herself having to search in multiple “nooks and crannies” before she began to see the entire breadth and scope of the institution’s global reach. Once Margo understood the current state of the institution in terms of its internationalization agenda, she was able to group the global operations into five distinct categories and utilize the college’s mission to drive those initiatives forward.

Because the college is highly ranked, both domestically and internationally, Margo receives numerous requests from international institutions inquiring about opportunities to collaborate. As a renowned leader in the field, Margo understands that there is a strong desire
from others to visit the college and “learn about what it is that [we] do…and how we do it”.

However, Margo is equally cognizant of the deleterious ramifications this could have on her institution and “guards [the institution’s] intellectual property very jealously”.

**Cindy.** Cindy works at a small private woman’s college in the U.S. As a small, distinct woman’s college, the discussion around sustainable business models have become common place. Taking items into consideration like finance, culture, and core purpose, internationalization, at Cindy’s institution, is a strategic initiative which will be developed and executed over the next 5 years.

For Cindy, the decision to internationalize is a combination of “strategy and financial capacity”; while the college has plans for revamping its international education office, study abroad programs, and global recruitment strategies, Cindy’s realistic approach is founded on being able to financially support initiatives. Cindy posits, “until we can fund [it], we can’t do it” and notes that these become challenging decisions for a small college with limited resources. Despite such limitations, Cindy’s personal experience as a peace core volunteer, furnishes her with firsthand exposure to the enormous impact an international opportunity can have on one’s life, thus making her a strong supporter and ally of international engagement.

Cindy has a unique background; prior to being appointed president, she acquired experiences working in a variety of industries before turning to higher education. This circuitous career path provided Cindy with innovative approaches to decision-making. During her tenure as president, Cindy has been confronted with “hard choices” that are “certainly not pain free”. However, capitalizing on opportunities, engaging in experimentation, resorting to the literature, and being comfortable with the risks and unknowns, has enabled Cindy to navigate the complex decision-making landscape at her institution. By embracing technology, partnering with external
constituencies, and meeting the bottom line, Cindy is able to broaden the institution’s global footprint.

**Zach.** Zach is the president of a large private research university in the U.S. Zach sees himself as a “a catalyst for change” working to empower faculty, staff, and students so that they embrace a global outlook and champion the international initiatives taking place on campus. This is achieved through internationalizing “at home” by providing the community and stakeholders with opportunities to travel abroad. For Zach, once faculty, staff, and students experience the world, they come back “transformed”, talk about their experiences, and become the “early adopters” of global initiatives; for Zach, this is what builds momentum to internationalize his campus.

Zach’s approach to decision-making is largely student-centered. Recognizing that students come to a large private institution at various stages of their own personal development, Zach strives to provide students with numerous paths towards international opportunities. Therefore, international programs range from more “nurtured” initiatives like faculty-led study abroad programs, to more independent opportunities like working abroad. Zach “personally believes that the student has to chart his or her own path”. While Zach understands that everyone in the community is responsible for the university as a whole, the stakeholders are “first and foremost the students” and the decision-making process stems from there.

**Summary.** In summary, the data reveals the unique lived experiences of six college and university presidents. The participants expound upon complex decision-making in terms of internationalization and each offer rich descriptive insight into the interrelated components of navigating alternative options and making definitive decisions. The following section will provide a composite of the data across all six participants thus revealing the four major themes
and 12 minor themes that emerged from the in-depth, one-on-one, semi structured and open-ended interviews, in an effort to understand the essence of the complex decision-making.

**Review of the Data**

The four major themes that were revealed through the data are: strategic decision-making, group decision-making, emotional orientation, and procedural strategies. The 12 minor themes that appeared were: financial drivers, resources, mission, innovation, collaboration via process, collaboration via communication, balance, transformation, altruism, competition, collecting information, and processing information. A visual of the themes and subthemes is depicted in Table 4.1 below. These major and minor themes reflect the essence of how college and university presidents describe complex decision-making processes as it relates to internationalization, and reveal the intentionality and consciousness associated with the participant’s first-hand, lived experiences.

Table 4.1

Themes and Subthemes

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Theme</th>
<th>Subtheme</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. Strategic Decision-Making</td>
<td>A. Financial drivers</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>B. Resources</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>C. Mission Driven</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>D. Innovation</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. Group Decision-Making</td>
<td>A. Collaboration via Process</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>B. Collaboration via Communication</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>C. Balance</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Within the scope of phenomenology, this methodology recognizes the unique lived experiences of the participants as they understand navigating the complex decision-making landscape. The section below will offer an introduction of the theme, followed by a narrative of the pertinent subthemes. When applicable, a table of direct quotes will follow the narrative passage to help capture meaning and commonalities across the six transcribed interviews. In other cases, a table will illustrate the relevance of a theme and subthemes by placing an “x” in a cell where the participants have directly or indirectly commented on the meaning units associated with the theme or subtheme. The cell within a table will be left blank if the participant did not reference the major, or minor theme.

Arranging the data in tables assisted the researcher in clustering, categorizing, and theming the information thus better positioning her to understand the textual and structural descriptions and perform her phenomenological analysis. The sections are organized based on the relevance of the theme and the supporting data of how those themes emerged. Through this process, it became evident that the themes and subthemes were interrelated. For the purpose of

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>3. Emotional Orientation</th>
<th>A. Transformation</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>B. Altruism</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>C. Competition</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>


<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>4. Procedural Strategies</th>
<th>A. Collection of Information</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>B. Processing of Information</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
this chapter, only the data will be presented; the findings, as they relate to the proposed research questions, the literature, methodology, and practice will be presented in chapter five.

**Strategic Decision-Making**

One of the ways college and university presidents make sense of the complex task of internationalizing one’s campus is through a series of strategic tactics. While one approach did not appear to be more prevalent than another, the participants discussed strategic decision-making in terms of financial drivers, resources, mission, and innovation. The following section will present the four subthemes and conclude with a table to highlight the predominant subthemes across the six participants.

**Financial drivers.** Financial considerations played a large role in the way in which some of the college and university presidents navigated decisions. However, the nuanced ways in which financial drivers became a catalyst for decision-making varied across participants.

**Student centered.** Zach and Rich’s experiences of financial and strategic decision-making strategies stemmed from a student-centered mindset. Both Zach and Rich articulated a strong commitment to providing students with opportunities to go abroad. In working towards developing these opportunities, the presidents quickly realized the financial barriers that were inhibiting students from taking advantage of the various global programs.

Historically, at Rich’s institution, students who chose to study abroad were not eligible to use financial aid to pay for their global endeavors. While Rich saw that in some cases, paying for a semester abroad in certain parts of the world was a cheaper, and a more economical choice for students, Rich’s dilemma was that these opportunities were not available to all students, only the select few who could afford it. Rich asserts, “for some kids, the net was positive, for the kids that depended on financial aid, either couldn’t go, or lost a lot of money in going”. The culture,
Rich explains, was that students wanted to study abroad but recognized the financial implications for doing so. As a result, students voiced their concerns and suggested that if financial aid was made available and could be utilized when studying overseas, then they would go abroad. Therefore, Rich knew that in order to achieve this form of internationalization through study abroad opportunities, he needed to make financial aid portable.

Rich saw the lack of financial support as a significant barrier to students going overseas. As a result, making financial aid available to students became one of the biggest factors in how Rich was able to internationalize his campus. Rich states:

“The students have been the ones who wanted this, and they told us, and we were able to give them what they wanted […], we’ve more than doubled the number of kids going abroad now since I’ve got here and it’s been a nice success story.

Similarly, Zach saw an opportunity to internationalize a co-operative education program that, historically, was only offered domestically. In the process of implementing this initiative and making the co-operative education program international, Zach was met with resistance by students who feared that the global opportunities to gain experience working abroad would favor those students who could afford it. Parallel to the culture at Rich’s institution, Zach was able to hear more implicitly that the students “were not questioning the fact that [this program] should become global, [but rather], they wanted to have access” to it. By listening to the students’ concerns, Zach recognized that the choice to internationalize a domestic program was a step in the right direction. Like Rich, the president did not want to marginalize any students, and therefore, reallocated scholarship funds in an effort to support students who were interested in working abroad. Zach states:
Therefore, we realized that we were on the right path, they [the students] wanted it. And they said help us do it, so what we did is we moved the scholarship to support the extra [costs], for those who go overseas and could not afford it.

**Financial responsibility.** Margo, Cindy, and Rich appear to experience strategic decision-making associated with the internationalization of their campus in terms of describing their financial responsibility.

Margo’s institution is engaged in a variety of global initiatives that are decentralized across her campus. Depending on the project, some of these initiatives provide monetary benefits to the college and can be understood as revenue generating partnerships. For Margo, one of the approaches to internationalization appears to reside in the ability to “diversify your sources of income”. This is achieved at Margo’s college through formalized consulting and advisory relationships with international partners. However, these are not ad hoc relationships. In order to engage in something that financially benefits the college, Margo demonstrates fiscal responsibility by utilizing the institution’s core mission as her guiding framework; she states, “if we need to do something that is going to financially support the college, we should make sure it is in the purview of our mission. So I think everything we do, that is, that has a financial benefit, is also focused on the mission”.

In relation, Rich and Cindy appear to ask the pointed questions of whether or not an internationalization initiative was feasibly and realistically affordable. In these cases the participants expressed budgetary concerns and illuminated the financial factors that impact strategic decision-making processes. Similar to Margo’s assertion that her institution’s core mission was a framework for financial decisions, Cindy states that “we were very realistic… we had to restrict ourselves to things that remained fairly close to our core competencies and were
affordable”. One of the reasons Cindy was appointed president, was to assist the college in recovering from the financial downturn that took place between 2007 and 2008 and regain financial sustainability. Therefore, the data reveals that Cindy’s experience with complex decision-making is strongly rooted in exerting fiscal responsibility. While it is in the best interest of her institution “to have a very well thought out international strategy”, Cindy feels strongly that “until we can fund that, we can’t do it”. As a result, Cindy’s experience appears to be a question of, “what strategic commitments are we going to make, and can we afford them? We’re not going to do them if we cannot afford them”.

To a lesser extent, Rich also made references to tailoring decisions in an effort to be financially stable. When Rich decided to make financial aid portable at his institution, he met with various stakeholders on campus to ensure that if aid were portable, the college would still be able to recuperate revenue when students went overseas. For Rich, “the only thing that I was worried about was what’s the financial piece on this and can we absorb this”? While initially, this appeared to be a sound financial model, Rich posits that:

We’ve actually reached the point right now where we have so many kids going abroad that we are hurting financially because we are missing out on the room and board. So it’s a nice problem to have.

However, even in Rich’s textual description, it appears as though the implicit meaning is that the participant is equally concerned that the success of internationalization on his campus can bear new fiscal challenges.

**Resources.** A second subtheme that emerged across the data was how the participants described strategic decision-making in terms of resources. This subtheme took on a variety of
forms ranging from staff development and increasing human capital, to recognizing the need for infrastructure and support structure to enhance the student experience.

**Increasing human capital.** Stephen describes the decentralization of international activity as something that is “not very well coordinated across the university. Some of them [the initiatives] were really not supported”. Stephen goes on to draw comparisons to other institutions and notes, from a human resource perspective:

> When we looked at other universities, we had no support or any sort of associate provost, or someone in the provost office, who would be responsible for international strategy and trying to coordinate our various activities.

Similarly, Rich’s experiences mirror those of Stephen’s in terms of strategic decision-making and the need for human capital. Rich’s description starts off by noticing what other institutions were doing in terms of internationalization and then realizing that he would need to make resource related strategic decisions if he wanted to compete in a similar market. Rich asserts:

> It became evident to me pretty quickly, early on, that we were lagging way behind what other schools were doing in terms of international education. So one of the first decisions was we need to get a really good experienced director.

**Facilities.** In addition to human capital, physical space became a resource that entered in the strategic decision-making process. Stephen advocates the need for resources in terms of physical space. Thinking long term, the participant states, “in the future we are thinking of some physical space for some of our international programs”. While Stephen was thinking long term about the physical plant and the need for operational space, Rich had space available, and strategically decided to move the study abroad office across the hall from the President’s Office.
This was a bold and tactical move which sent a message across campus that international education was important. Rich states:

Before, it [the study abroad office] was hidden some place. It was in a corner way up there, and there was one person with one assistant. I don’t know if you have been in the office over there, but it’s a bigger office, with more folks, working on support. So I think symbolically, it tells everybody, this is important. This merits, if you will, prime real estate on campus, easy to find, everybody knows where it is, and I think it’s perceived as a very user friendly place.

Therefore, resources like human capital and operational space were strategic decisions for both Stephen and Rich in an effort to help propel their international agenda.

**Human capital within one’s means.** Jerry describes strategic decision-making in terms of “opportunity cost”. Working in a small private institution makes Jerry acutely aware of the balance between quantity and quality. While most of Jerry’s international partnerships are grounded in research, Jerry knows that he cannot stretch his faculty and staff too thin. Jerry asserts that he is working with “fairly limited” resources in terms of human capital. Jerry describes his experience as follows:

Everything has an opportunity costs. That’s another factor that goes into these considerations. [The project in Europe] is taking a large number of faculty. Whatever excess time, whatever time we can get people to devote to something like this, they cannot do two of those or three of those. And we cannot do two or three of those, so all those things get weighed in.

Zach’s approach to human capital was slightly different relative to the other participants. Zach appeared to already have the personnel and the infrastructure in place. However, for him, it
was a matter of staff development and training. Using the admissions office as his primary example, Zach’s success story initiates with the expansion of international students on campus; Zach was able to increase the international student population from 3% to 17%. For Zach, this was “easier said than done”. One of the obstacles Zach noticed was that “the staff that were supposed to do it [recruit international students] were not global. They didn’t travel overseas”. Zach empowered his admissions team by providing them with opportunity to travel abroad.

The first lesson is you want your staff to become international in the sense of understanding the opportunities and understanding the world. If they do not understand them, if they haven’t traveled globally, they are not going to be able to do it (Zach, 2014).

Cindy also points out, like Jerry, that she too is working “with limited resources” in terms of personnel, and because of this limitation, the decision-making process is not simple. Cindy is aware of the importance of moving the institution’s international agenda forward over the next five years, and is committed to revamping the way in which international programs operate, including international student enrollment. However, this agenda is closely tied to resources. Cindy states:

It’s more than recruitment, it’s about being ready to support the experience of students from outside the U.S. on campus, and we are not ready for that today. The strategic task would be both parts, the recruiting and the readiness part.

For Stephen, Rich, Zach, Jerry, and Cindy, strategic decision-making in terms of resources means acknowledging the role human capital plays in moving the international agenda forward. As seen through the data, this can be illustrated in the hiring or training of personnel, and/or by acknowledging the resources that the participants already have access to, and developing a strategy that can work within those boundaries without over taxing the faculty and staff.
Mission. The third subtheme that emerged from the data relates to the institution’s mission. The interview transcriptions reveal that complex decision-making also involves utilizing a guiding framework as a backbone for how college and university presidents internationalize their respective campuses. As such, the participants described the process of strategic decision-making in terms of being mission driven.

Margo posits that at her institution “we view our international work as an extension of our mission statement”. While Margo classifies her institution’s international activity into five pillars, she notes that across all of those silos, each of the initiatives “advance the mission, or support the mission in some way”. Margo describes her experience to internationalize her institution not only as a “mandate”, but also, as “a mission driven desire to engage with the world”. This mirror’s Cindy’s approach to complex decision making as she notes that her decisions are formulated based on the college’s “core purpose”. While Rich does not speak explicitly about mission-driven decisions, he does allude to it when he is faced with complex decisions, stating, “I always try and come back to the question of what experiences can we provide our students so that they grow in the ways we want them to grow”. It is evident that Rich leads an institution that is high-touch and student centered, and that these lines of questioning can be derived from the institution’s core values.

Stephen is in the process of developing a university wide strategic plan which involves rewriting the vision and mission statements at his institution. Stephen described the use of these statements as “a guiding framework” for the university, schools, and departments to adopt and interpret as they develop their own strategic plans at the unit level. For Stephen, the mission “is not a document which sits on the shelf. It’s a dynamic document” and he is charging his
community to refresh their own departmental strategies based “on their interpretations of the university wide plan”.

Innovation. The data reveals innovation as a fourth subtheme that is a key component to strategic decision-making. While the participants were describing the complex factors that impact their decision-making process, several college and university presidents turned to innovative and experimental techniques as a tool for solving complex problems. For example, Stephen described the process of developing a university wide strategy as something that has never been done before. He was willing to try something new in order to accomplish his agenda. Stephen states:

So after my first year, we were going to start a university wide strategic plan. And there had never been a university wide plan before, it had always been school specific. This was a chance to articulate our mission and our vision and what we thought was important going forward.

Additionally, in order to help the campus community understand the university wide plan, Stephen and his team decided to write “a prelude to the strategic plan, which was a new experiment”.

Similarly, as Cindy was trying to generate buy-in among her campus community, she too decided to engage in an experiment. For Cindy, experimentation allowed all of the stakeholders to learn about the process without committing to too much financial risk. However, this technique was met with “enormous resistance”. The resistance to the decision-making experiment revealed that if the stakeholders could not embrace the changes being made at an experimental level, then Cindy was confronted with a different dilemma. Cindy states:
I often felt like, really? The experiment part here is, can anyone get over the notion that they don’t want to change? Because if the outcome of that question was no way, then we have a different problem.

Internationalization provided Rich with an opportunity to be innovative in the sense of redesigning the undergraduate core curriculum. This redesign embedded global perspectives into course content and focused on enhancing student learning outcomes such as intercultural competence. However, this innovative strategic decision became the “biggest and thorniest” decision with which Rich was confronted. Despite the challenges, Rich’s original ideas allowed him and his team to “rethink what we are trying to do [and] rethink our pedagogy”.

For Stephen, Cindy, and Rich, innovation and experimentation allowed the presidents to embrace new and creative ways of addressing complex decision-making in terms of internationalization. While Cindy and Rich described their experiences as challenging, all three participants were able to utilize innovation as part of their strategic decision-making process to successfully advance their internationalization agenda.

**Summary.** The participants described navigating complex decision-making in regards to internationalization in terms of making strategic decisions. The following table illustrates the theme of strategic decision-making by identifying the relevant subthemes that emerged from the data. The “x” denotes that the data revealed the following subthemes disaggregated by participant.

**Table 4.2**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Participant</th>
<th>Financial Drivers</th>
<th>Resources</th>
<th>Mission</th>
<th>Innovation</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Stephen</td>
<td>x</td>
<td>x</td>
<td>x</td>
<td>x</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Group Decision-Making

Group decision-making is a second major theme that arose from the data. Group tactics were not only a way in which the participants described decision-making, but also, a technique used as they formulated complex decisions. While discussed in varied forms, five of the six participants expressed that working in groups, generating buy-in, building consensus, and hearing diverse perspectives strengthened the outcome of decisions made. The following section will highlight group decision-making in terms of the following three subthemes: collaboration via process, collaboration via communication, and balance. The following section will concluded with a table of results.

Collaboration via Process. Participants describe complex decision-making in regards to internationalizing their campus as a collaborative process. Zach, for example, states that “we are all responsible for the university as a whole, which means that the decision-making process entails that everybody is at the table”. For Zach, the university community is a stakeholder and that getting a group to discuss, and weigh in on a decision, “sharpens the decision-making process”. Zach asserts that by the time a decision is reached, from a group perspective, “we looked at the pros, we looked at the cons, we looked at the risks, we looked at the rewards, and then we made the decision not based on an impulse”.

In terms of collaboration, Jerry engages faculty and students. Jerry notes that there is a:
Delicate balance between trying to lead a university of faculty and students by creating ways and directions and coming up with new concepts and ideas, but then, also having them [the faculty and students] essentially be, in the end, the prime movers, because they have to be.

Similar to Jerry’s collaborative process, Zach also utilizes the momentum of the student body noting that; “the stakeholders are first and foremost the students” and by empowering them to own internationalization initiatives, Zach is able to further the institution’s global agenda. Zach understands that with any change there will be three outcomes: stakeholders who are resistant, constituencies that remain neutral, and people that are “the early adopters”. Zach depend on the “early adopters” as a strategy for change by “rely[ing] on them to launch it, to embrace it, and to own it”. For Zach, the “real change occurs when people own it.”

Analogous to Zach’s approach, Cindy describes a process of having “a lot of people involved” with different experiences, “people [from] all over the college”. The technique of involving a diverse constituency of people in a change process such as internationalization, allows stakeholders to feel a part of the change, and see firsthand what was taking place. Cindy describes the experiences as follows: “Everyone had to be involved; they began to see, even though this wasn’t working, they began to see that promise, and that was good enough”. For Cindy, even though she was met with “enormous resistance”, once people began to be engaged in the process, they could begin to see the long term benefits.

The collaboration process also involves building teams and committees. Rich, jokingly asserts that “the first task always on a college campus is to put together a committee”. Rich is aware of the success committees can bring to the decision-making process. Similarly, both Stephen and Jerry utilize committees as they navigate the complex decision-making landscape of
internationalization. Stephen, for example developed 10 working groups as part of his strategic planning process. Jerry on the other hand devised a faculty committee noting that “if we don’t get the faculty behind us, then this [initiative] is not going to go anywhere”.

Jerry’s process of group decision-making embraces a combination of top-down and bottom up approaches. While these decisions were grounded on the overarching global strategy of the university, Jerry acknowledges that some international initiatives grow out of opportunism and at the faculty level. Jerry states that “a lot of things happen here, as they do at any university, are sort of bottoms up”. Jerry continues, faculty “have a friend or a former student who go to, let’s say, Japan, and then comes back and says we want to have a collaboration of some kind. Those things sort of bubble up from the bottom up, we don’t try and control those”. Similar to Jerry, Margo expresses that international collaboration at her institution also “grows out of opportunism” and the bottom up approach from “both the personal interest of faculty and staff”.

Alternatively, other international collaborations are mandated from the top down. In both Jerry and Margo’s experience, delegations would occasionally come from other institutions to visit their schools. Depending on the nature of the partnership, these delegations would form institutional relationships that would be driven and spearheaded from executive and senior management and then trickle down. In these cases, Jerry asserts that the “central administration plays a role of trying to support and facilitate those [partnerships]”.

For Stephen, group decision-making embraces a process of engagement with the university community. Stephen states, “We had an engagement process, forums, town hall meetings, focus groups, lunches, and breakfasts, everything you could possibly imagine, to engage faculty, students and staff”. However, the views of the faculty, staff, students, and
trustees, varied and created another “problem of balance”. Despite the challenges posed by group decision-making, Stephen believes that “decisions on your own are flawed” and that “it’s by the engagement and group interaction that you come up with a much better way”. Stephen continues, “For me, it’s getting buy-in and improving the outcome because group thinking is going to give you a better decision”.

**Collaboration via Communication.** Other forms of group decision-making appeared through collaboration methods via communication strategies. For example, the decisions Rich made came about from “what I knew from talking with students”. Rich routinely engages in a dialogue with students by attending Student Congress meetings. By being present at these gatherings, Rich is able to “just get in there [and ask] what’s on your mind”? In addition to the formality of Student Congress meetings, Rich also has informal lunches with students twice a month in an effort to garner diverse perspectives across the student population. These strategies allow for open lines of communication between the student body and the president.

On the other hand, communication, for Stephen, involves being transparent with the community. Stephen reveals that making people feel that they have contributed to the process and final product enhances buy-in, and that these communication strategies lead to a better decision. Stephen believes that part of his transparency, in terms of group decision-making, is by acknowledging minority perspectives. Stephen asserts, “you have to be able to respect the minority view…articulate what the minority view was and note it [in the report], even if the decision was not to go down the route that they would have preferred”.

**Balance.** The third subtheme that has emerged as part of group decision-making was balance. Almost all of the participants expressed the need to achieve and maintain a sense of balance as part of the decision-making process.
Rich describes the challenges of achieving balance in strong military terms. For Rich, people involved in the group decision-making process “had strong views”; on one hand, they did not want to “change much of anything”, and then, to the other extreme, stakeholders said, “lets blow it up!” and start from scratch. Achieving balance “took a lot of work”. When a decision was finally agreed upon, Rich said “it felt like World War II had ended”. Because a balance was achieved, the end result offered a satisfactory option. Rich states, “none of us got everything the way we wanted it, but we really worked to get to the point where I felt like this is much better than what we had”. Through group decision-making, “negotiating”, and striving for balance, Rich was able to arrive at a spot where “we all felt good about it”.

Although Jerry describes formulating decisions as a group process that is derived from both a top-down and bottom up approaches, he acknowledges that a lot of negotiating is involved in the process. He describes the experience as a constant “back and forth, kind of like tossing a hot potato” until a decision is reached. It is that “interplay [that] is probably the trickiest thing we are dealing with”. Similarly, Zach too articulates the “constant back and forth” associated with complex decision-making. This osculation however is not linear. For Zach, generating buy-in and starting a project happens simultaneously; Zach asserts, “you launch it, work on it, adjust it, readjust, meanwhile, you refine, you have people who are owning it, are excited about it, you cannot do things in a staged way.”

The subtheme of balances occurs frequently as Stephen reflects on his experiences making complex decisions. This “problem of balance” can occur at various levels throughout the institution, i.e., at the student level, department level, school, or university wide. As seen throughout Stephen’s engagement efforts, the president will still be confronted with having to
manage diverse perspectives across the university community which becomes yet “another balancing act”.

**Summary.** In summary, each participant described elements of group decision-making strategies as they experienced having to formulate complex decisions. Table 4.3 illustrates the emergent subthemes of group decision-making disaggregated by participant.

Table 4.3

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Participant</th>
<th>Collaboration via Process</th>
<th>Collaboration via Communication</th>
<th>Balance</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Stephen</td>
<td>x</td>
<td>x</td>
<td>x</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Jerry</td>
<td>x</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rich</td>
<td>x</td>
<td>x</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Margo</td>
<td>x</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cindy</td>
<td>x</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Zach</td>
<td>x</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Emotional Orientation**

The lived experiences of the participants, as they describe situations where they had to make complex choices related to internationalizing their campus, reveals the strong emotions that are inherent to the decision-making process. The following section will describe the third major theme of emotional orientation and present the following three subthemes: transformation, altruism, and competition, followed by tables of either direct quotes, or a chart depicting relevance by placing an “x” to indicate which subtheme was revealed by which participant, when appropriate.
Transformation. Several of the participants describe their decision-making experience in terms of their emotional state. After reviewing the data, it appears that participants experience a transformation between emotional states as they engage in complex decision-making processes. The below table showcases direct quotes from the participants in order to best capture their emotional transition throughout the decision-making process. If a participant’s row is blank, that is because that participant did not directly comment the subtheme.

Table 4.4
Quotes Illustrating the Emotional Subtheme of Transformation

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Participant</th>
<th>Initial state</th>
<th>Transitional action</th>
<th>Ending state</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Stephen</td>
<td>It was a challenge.</td>
<td>You shouldn't be compromising your principles, ... Take the high road as best you can.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>What are the principles upon which you can get out of bed and look at yourself in the mirror. And that's the way you should be making decisions on that.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Jerry</td>
<td>So now we had to figure this out, does this make any sense?</td>
<td>Making a judgment on the basis of incomplete information.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>This is a qualitative decision…we don't have an algorithm.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rich</td>
<td>I kinda have to trust the people.</td>
<td></td>
<td>Sometimes it's an ad hoc decision.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
I was terrified. I knew nothing about the project. I oversaw every step. I'm not afraid for my institution financially or reputationally and so, I feel comfortable with that decision-making process.

We were very realistic. There's a lot of qualitative stuff that has to go into that. We have made a lot of hard choices [...] It hasn’t been easy and it certainly has not been pain free [...] But they were the right things to do.

As the table outlines, almost all of the participants demonstrated an initial reaction towards the decision needing to be made, followed by a way of dealing with the emotion, and then arriving at an end state, which allowed the participants to feel confident with the decision he or she made. In addition to the above quotes which depict the participants’ transition as they navigated the complex decision-making process, additional phrases are found within the raw data. Cindy, for example, describes complex decision making as “not easy to do”. Whereas Margo, “had a sense” that her decisions “could have grave ramifications” because she was lacking information and did not know “what was inside that black box”; “didn’t know the people
[she] was working with”; and she “didn’t know who [her] partners would be”. Transformation for these participants appears to result in feeling comfortable with the decision made, whether that is a “judgment” call, a “principled” choice, or knowing that it was the “right thing to do”.

Rich offers a confident outlook on decision-making, noting that he is “a competitive guy”, he was driven to achieve his internationalization goal with a “we’re going to get this done” attitude, thus contributing to his “success story”.

Half of the participants also expressed the willingness to walk away from a decision which reveals courage within the decision-making process. Margo explicitly stated that she was “willing to walk away” from a decision with which she was not comfortable. Similarly, Jerry spoke about “there always [being] an exit strategy” so that if something does not go well, he is comfortable stating that “this wasn’t the right one after all, and I have to figure out how to unwind”.

**Altruism.** Altruism is a second subtheme that emerged throughout the data as the participants described their experiences in complex decision-making. While the participants were telling their story, references began to surface with regards to the impact a decision would have on the greater whole, whether that is the institution, the college and university community, or the student experience.

**Global capacity building.** Jerry and Margo addressed their desire to build capacity in foreign countries in which they were operating. When strategically identifying international partnerships, and deciding in which countries to build relationships, Jerry spoke about collaboration and the need for having a shared sense of a common agenda with his international partners. Jerry posits, “world problems won’t have just a U.S. solution. Water, energy, food, you know that whole issue of how to build innovation economies. All of those things are global”.

Jerry continues, “being connected to other researchers elsewhere, actually will make our research better”. Moreover, Jerry notes that “other countries are very keen to try and figure out how we do that so that they can do it too”.

Similarly, for Margo, capacity building entails the transfer of knowledge and passing along information and expertise to collaborators in other parts of the world. The challenge for Margo became an “ethical debate” and a question of “how one interacts in the world, and how one interacts in a world where shared values are not common”. For Margo, these queries further complicate the decision-making process of how to internationalize her institution portending to the morally complex dilemma of figuring out if global “engagement in education, higher education in particular, is a positive good for the world, and is it still a good when it isn’t perfect?” Margo compassionately describes these decisions as ones grounded on being able to “contribute to a positive forward movement through educational engagement”.

While Jerry and Margo describe capacity building approaches to knowledge transfer, Cindy described a pragmatic mentality of “matching what you think you can do with what you think the world needs done”. Cindy curtails decision-making based on “the match to the market place” affirming her “very realistic” approach to complex decisions regarding internationalization.

Local benefits. In addition, participants also describe weighing decisions on the benefit the outcome would have on a more local platform. Turning from the global benefit of helping other countries, some participants describe how decisions benefit the institution on a more local level. For example, Margo felt comfortable with a decision because she “believe[s] it can happen safely” and “can benefit the college”. In a similar vein, Stephen is implementing strategic decisions in order to make “the university a better institution for everyone”. Moreover,
Rich describes a time in which he was negotiating with students about moving a popular fall event from junior year to senior year. The shift in co-curricular programming enabled more students to study abroad during the fall semester of their junior year. Thus, Rich asserts that the decision to move an event from junior year to senior year “has been beneficial for us all”. The below table displays quotes from the six participants illustrating the emotional subtheme of altruism.

Table 4.5
Quotes Illustrating the Emotional Subtheme of Altruism

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Participant</th>
<th>Global benefit</th>
<th>Local benefit</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Stephen</td>
<td>Making the university a better institution for everyone.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Jerry</td>
<td>What we call capacity building component where we are working with international partners to help them achieve something that they are, you know, build something they want to build.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rich</td>
<td>[It] has been beneficial for us all.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Margo</td>
<td>[It] can benefit the college.</td>
<td>[It] can benefit the college.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
world and is it still a good when it
isn't perfect?

Matching what you think you can do
Cindy with what you think the world needs
done.

Zach

It has provided opportunities for every
student to go explore the world.

**Competition.** The data revealed that the participants had a unique perspective of
decision-making in terms of the competitive nature of higher education. Extrapolated from the
raw data, the emotional subtheme of competition emerged as a third subtheme as participants
described their experiences navigating complex decision-making. The emotional subtheme of
competition occurred for the participants in two forms.

First, competition emerged as some participants described the high-stakes environment of
higher education in a global arena. This sense of competition was articulated in terms of drawing
comparisons to peer institutions, looking at rankings, having or gaining a national or an
international presence, and being globally visible. For example, when Stephen was describing
the lack of resources within the structure of his institution and engaging in strategic decision-
making as previously referenced, it appears as though he simultaneously was drawing these
conclusions with intentionality and consciousness of the competitive environment. Therefore, he
was turning to peer institutions as a benchmark for what needed to occur at his institution.

Stephen states:
When we looked at other universities, we had no support and sort of associate provost or someone in the provost office who would be responsible for international strategy and trying to coordinate our various activities.

Similarly, Rich exhibited parallel behaviors by drawing comparisons to peer institutions. Rich asserts, “I was also goaded by the realization that [peer college] was a lot better at this than we were. […] I was looking at [peer college] and going wow, they are just crushing us in this”. By making comparisons to other colleges and universities, Rich was able to determine the ways in which he needed to develop his internationalization strategy in order to remain competitive.

Moreover, Jerry works at an institution that is highly internationally ranked and attracts a number of international students, scholars, and faculty. Jerry describes reputational success as one of the reasons “why everybody comes here.” However, he asserts that “in order to stay that way, we need to essentially have both visibility and presence.” He continues, “Fundamentally, we are in the talent business, of attracting the best talent; faculty and students. And that’s now a global enterprise.”

Alternatively, while Cindy would reference what other institutions were doing in terms of internationalizing their campus, Cindy did not feel as though her institution needed to follow suit. For Cindy, her decisions are strongly associated with fiscal responsibility. Therefore, while peer institutions were excelling in international recruitment, Cindy describes her efforts as being focused on expanding enrollment on a national level. Similar to Jerry, Cindy is aware of how rankings impact decision-making strategies in terms of how she is internationalizing her campus. However, Cindy posits that her institution does not have a global reach outside of a few select graduate programs which have been nationally ranked. As a result, her internationalization strategy involves broadening her institution’s reach by having a larger “national footprint”.
Secondly, the competitive subtheme reveals itself as some participants proudly describe the niche their institution holds within the higher education landscape. While some complex decisions are made with a keen awareness of domestic and international rankings in an effort to increase visibility, decision-makers are also conveying their competitive edge as they describe their expertise in various disciplines. As a result, competition encompasses both the participants’ acute sensitivity to external influences in terms of recognition, and being actively engaging in the global higher education conversation, as well as internal characteristics that are articulated on a more individual scope. Instead of conforming to peer institutions, participants describe how special, unique, and individual their own institution is, and it is that distinctiveness that sets them apart. Consequently, participants come to realize that the competitive mindset is a factor that influences the complex decision-making process.

As Jerry and Margo both describe their institutions’ expertise, they also address the importance of protecting intellectual property. For both participants, being an expert in a field allows the institutions to attract students and faculty, and accordingly, provides the college and university with an additional level of competition. Jerry is aware that because of his institution’s proficiency in particular disciplines, “other countries are very keen to try and figure out how we do that so that they can do it too”. On the other hand, Margo’s assertive mindset acknowledges that they are “a small college which has a very, very specific expertise, and, if we give it [our knowledge] away, we will lose our value.” She continues, it is “again, a very narrow, very specific expertise you are trying to guard”. Correspondingly, Cindy affirms, “we have to be really clear that we know what it takes to be distinctive” if her institution wants to remain competitive in the higher education landscape.
The following table illustrates the emotional subtheme of competition disaggregated by participant.

Table 4.6

Relevance of Emotional Subtheme of Competition

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Participant</th>
<th>External environment</th>
<th>Individual expertise</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Stephen</td>
<td>x</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Jerry</td>
<td>x</td>
<td>x</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rich</td>
<td>x</td>
<td>x</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Margo</td>
<td>x</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cindy</td>
<td>x</td>
<td>x</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Zach</td>
<td>x</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Procedural Strategies**

The fourth major theme that emerged from the data is procedural strategies. When asked to describe a time in which the presidents had to make a complex decision in terms of how they were internationalizing their campus, each of the participants began to describe decision-making in terms of process. Furthermore, procedural strategies have varying degrees of meaning which elicited subthemes of how the participants were collecting information and processing the information once it was obtained.

Because of the abundance of requests from international institutions to partner with the participants, or the number of ways in which an institution can internationalize, Cindy describes the decision-making process as taking a lot of “hard work”. According to Jerry, it can be “tricky” because there was not an algorithm to making decisions, but rather, he has to “sort through” the information. Alternatively, Margo couldn’t “keep track of” all of the information
and it became “overwhelming”. As such, it was crucial that participants develop a way to collect information and process the data.

**Collecting Information.** One of the subthemes that was revealed by the transcriptions was how the participants describe the process of collecting information. Because Stephen had a strong focus on group decision-making strategies, a lot of his information was collected through engagement with the university community. Stephen asserts that there are “small things you can do as well in the decision-making process” referring to actions like “showing up at events”, “listening”, and “writing notes when people are speaking”. Rich describes collecting information through “informal” meetings with students and having a “dialogue”. Similar to Stephen, listening also played a significant role in how Rich collected data.

Jerry engaged in a very linear process of collecting information. When working with international partners, it was important for Jerry and his team to collect information in a way that would “test the level of seriousness” of the relationship. Because the partnerships occasionally involved the exchange of services and payments, Jerry needed to ensure that systems were intact for the various transactions. Jerry asserts, “I would say there were several points at which we knew that if we go to the next point, we’re progressively more engaged, and, at some point, we had to be pretty sure, we had to have a fairly high probability that we weren’t just going to turn around and say no”.

Part of the data collection process involves building relationships and understanding the people with whom the college and university presidents would be collaborating. Zach posits that “you want people to visit and see on the ground” and see for themselves, if there is an international partnership worth pursuing. Similarly, Jerry notes that part of his data collection process involved physically sending a delegation overseas to investigate the global partners and
see for themselves if the partnership was valid. Moreover, Margo describes needing to know with whom she is working and “figuring out if they [are] responsible and appropriate”. In an effort to find out this information, Margo “got on a plane to [the country] and met with all of the various individuals”. In Cindy’s experience, “the question was, we didn’t know these people” and consequently, processes needed to be in place so that the participant could garner a better understanding of the partnerships she was forging.

The following table elucidates the various paths participants took in order to obtain the necessary information prior to making a complex decision.

Table 4.7

Quotes Illustrating the Procedural Subtheme of Collecting Information

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Participant</th>
<th>Collecting Information. Example 1.</th>
<th>Collecting Information. Example 2</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Stephen</td>
<td>Focus groups were formed on areas where we thought we needed a deeper dive.</td>
<td>We had a retreat over two days to really hash this out.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Jerry</td>
<td>We did a big fact finding and then we came back and brought a faculty committee together.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rich</td>
<td>We took a hard look.</td>
<td>Created a bunch of committees.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Margo</td>
<td>Do a deep dive […] I would say I spent maybe 3 months […] trying to delve into whether or not this was a responsible project.</td>
<td>Understand those partners, going to their headquarters, and meeting all of the people.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Cindy: It was very data based, it wasn't opinion based.

One of the things you learn [...] is always to go to the literature as my first step when I am doing something new.

Zach: You start by doing your homework.

We do a lot of studies on what people call market studies. We have an extensive system here and people doing that, so we don't engage unless we have mind information.

Throughout the various ways in which information was collected, the question emerged as to when participants felt that they obtained adequate information and were ready to embark upon a decision. Stephen feels that the search process of obtaining information is complete when he has reached a saturation of perspectives. Stephen states:

I think you are trying to get the variety of opinions and the strength of that opinion and deciding which road to travel. So, when you start hearing the same things, you probably got the information you need.

Across all of the participants, there was agreement that no one will ever obtain 100% of the information, and that there will continue to be unknowns. The table below showcases how the participants describe the amount of information they needed to collect, as well as their descriptions as to when they felt they had enough information to make that decision.
Table 4.8
Quotes Illustrating the Procedural Subtheme of Collecting Information in terms of the amount of information needed and readiness to make a decision

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Participant</th>
<th>Amount of information</th>
<th>When participants knew they had enough information</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Stephen</td>
<td>I guess if you got broad enough views, they start to repeat themselves.</td>
<td>There’s only so many angles on an issue.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Jerry</td>
<td>If you wait until you have everything, every possible fact and contingency covered, it will be long dead by that time, certainly the opportunity will be long dead by that time, because you cannot wait that long. You need to make the best guess.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rich</td>
<td>And I got more comfortable with it and felt like I could make the other argument. […] but, I’m not afraid for my institution financially, or</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
reputational. And so, I feel comfortable with that decision making process.

I can tell when I know what's basically out there. The hunt for more information isn't going to do me any good […] I have a good sense of this is the information that exists and we are going to have to go from there.

Processing Information. The data also revealed the subtheme of processing information.

Once all of the information was collected, the participants described their lived experiences as they navigate their way through the data, the options, and the process by which they arrived at the appropriate alternative choice.

For Stephen, “Many of the things I thought in the beginning never appeared in the plan” thus alluding to the fact that information had to be sorted, and their relevance had to be accessed
as to whether or not the information was appropriate and applicable. If the information was not significant, it could be discarded. Similarly, participants also described sifting through information by being able to identify what it was that they didn’t want to do. Acknowledging that a particular path was “not really our mission”, as Stephen states, became a way of narrowing down the data. Margo took a similar approach by recognizing that certain ideas, options or suggestions were “not something we’ve entertained here”, thus removing those choices from the alternative options, as she navigated the decision-making process. However, for Cindy, the narrowing down of available alternatives was not an easy process. She posits that there were “a lot of qualitative stuff that [had] to go into that as well”.

Additionally, Rich and Cindy both describe the processing of information in terms of group decision making. Rich turned to external resources and “brought in a firm” to assist with the processing of information. Cindy, on the other hand, turned to the internal stakeholders and “had to bring [the information] to the board. In both of these situations, the participants relied on additional people in an effort to process the information. The following table provides a summary of the various techniques participants employed to process information.

Table 4.9
Quotes Illustrating the Procedural Subtheme of Processing Information

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Participant</th>
<th>Sorting Processes</th>
<th>Internal and external processes</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Stephen</td>
<td>Many of the things we thought in the beginning never appeared in the plan.</td>
<td>This is a bricks and mortar university</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>[…] That’s not really our mission.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
So one of the tricky things that we have to do is sort through all of this [...] make choices among the various potential [partners] that we have. And how does that fit into our own strategic plan?

Rich Brought in a firm.

But we’re trying to do it within the framework of our core mission.

Margo

We had to bring [the information] to the board.

Cindy

You work on it, you adjust it, [and]

Zach readjust it.

Conclusion

The in-depth phenomenological analysis of the interview data from six participants uncovered four major themes and 12 subthemes which describe the participants’ lived experiences of navigating complex decisions in terms of how they internationalize their institution. The four major themes that were revealed through the data are: strategic decision-making, group decision-making, emotional orientation and procedural strategies. The 12 minor
themes that appeared were: financial drivers, resources, mission, innovation, collaboration via process, collaboration via communication, balance, transformation, altruism, competition, collecting information, and processing information.

The major and minor themes reflect the bounded rationality framework by suggesting the searching features participants undergo when confronted with complex decisions, and the spectrum upon which decisions are made with satisfactory or optimal information. The emerging themes and subthemes also reflect aspects of the literature review portending to the various models in which colleges and university presidents can engage in internationalization activities, and the numerous factors that contribute to those decisions. Chapter Five will explore the findings of this study as it relates to the theoretical framework, existing literature, the selected methodology, as well as provide an analysis of the data as it relates to the research questions.
Chapter 5 – Discussion of Research Findings

The complicated nature of internationalization requires university and college presidents to explore multiple outcomes when engaging in complex decision-making. Due to the complexity of those choices, institutional leaders are confronted with the reality that the optimal, or best scenario, may not always be available. Therefore, presidents are placed in situations where they are required to make good or satisfactory decisions that are more appropriate (Snowden & Boone, 2007, p. 3). As a result, this study was guided by the following central research question which sought to describe the main characteristics of rational choice among college and university presidents in situations where complexity precludes omniscience. As such, this qualitative phenomenological study was designed to capture the essence of how college and university presidents describe their lived experience navigating the complex decision-making landscape as they internationalize their institution.

Chapter Four presented four major themes and 12 minor themes which emerged from the data as participants described their experience of complex decision-making in terms of internationalizing their respective campuses. The major themes include: strategic decision-making, group decision-making, emotional orientation, and procedural strategies. The 12 minor themes that appeared were: financial drivers, resources, mission, innovation, collaboration via process, collaboration via communication, balance, transformation, altruism, competition, collecting information, and processing information. Through free imaginative variation, the phenomenological researcher determined what information was essential in order to understand the phenomenon under investigation (Giorgi, 1997; Giorgi 2012). Although the themes and subthemes are interconnected, the lens of bounded rationality (Simon 1972; March, 1978) enabled the researcher to better understand where on the satisficing and optimizing spectrum
college and university presidents formulate decisions. These findings inform the main research question as well as the four sub-questions that were driving this study. The findings from this study suggest:

1. Complex decision-making processes incorporate characteristics and traits derived from other decision-making approaches.
2. Complex decision-making involves a shift or alteration in emotion.
3. Complex decision-making can be both linear and non-linear.

These findings will be discussed below and presented alongside the theoretical framework, the literature, and the research design. Additionally, the researcher will discuss the implications of this study, identify limitations, and provide avenues for future research.

**Discussion of the Findings in Relationship to the Theoretical Framework**

Bounded rationality (Simon 1972; March, 1978) was the theoretical framework underpinning the findings and may be best understood in relation to rational choice theory. Rational choice theory assumes that people always make prudent and logical decisions in an effort to achieve the greatest benefit, value, or satisfaction. Bounded rationality postulates that people weigh the likely positive benefits against likely negative consequences and subsequently base their decision on what they think will offer the greatest benefit. This theory is revealed in the findings as some participants described aspects of the decision-making process in altruistic terms thus contemplating the benefits of the decisions against their challenges and negative consequences.

Rational choice assumes that humans always behave in rational ways; however, Simon (1979) asserts that rationality becomes bound when it can no longer be considered omniscient and that the two central concepts of the theory lay within the search and satisficing features. In
this study, all of the participants described experiences of needing to make a complex decision without having all of the information at hand. The participants engaged in various methods for seeking out available alternative choices and described the emotional, strategic, procedural, and group-decision-making factors that allowed them to arrive at the critical moment of choice and the commitment to take action.

While aspirations for these participants may start off at an optimizing level, real-world scenarios become over-simplified to a degree that the decision-maker can manage. As the decision-maker continues to examine the available choices, the individual may ultimately arrive at a realistic end, yielding a satisfactory response. In this study, the findings suggest that balance was a critical component that factored into how college and university presidents arrived at their decisions and, as Rich asserts, “none of us got everything the way we wanted it, but we really worked to get to the point where I felt like this is much better than what we had”.

Alternatively, optimizing decision-making emphasizes the formal and calculated process involved in evaluating and detecting the best possible outcome while mitigating as much uncertainty as possible (Simon, 1972). The findings of this study revealed that participants developed criteria to help them navigate the complex decision-making process. As participants described their practice of sorting through the various alternative choices, they often would refer to a guiding framework such as their institution’s mission or strategic plan to help them evaluate their available options. To this extent, optimization complements rationality asserting that decision-making is a fully rational process.

Most notably, rationality cannot be understood within a global context. That is to say, the complexity of a situation may be too large in scope and unmanageable, and the decision-maker is required to simplify the circumstances in order to drive a realistic scenario to which one is able
to arrive at a decision. Therefore, limitations such as the lack of information, the cognitive limitations of one’s mind, and/or the finite amount of time one has to make decisions, Simon (1972) argues, are elements by which the rational decision-making processes are bound. Boundaries based on assumptions are critical because they establish limitations in which to apply theory (Bacharach, 1989).

**Identify the need to make a decision.** The first research question asked participants to describe the complex decision-making process in terms of how college and university presidents internationalize their campus. This constructivist lens helped explore how the participants explained their decision-making process by first identifying the need to internationalize their campus. The findings in this study showed that participants surveyed the environmental landscape of higher education, both domestically as well as internationally, as they addressed the competitive nature of higher education, and the need to make strategic decisions in order to sustain and strengthen their presence in the market-place. Rich noticed that his institution wasn’t doing what other peer institutions were doing in terms of growing their global footprint, and thus, this observation prompted him to make procedural and strategic decisions as he embarked upon internationalizing his campus. Similarly, Zach, Margo, and Jerry drew comparisons to the external environment by examining the international arena and identified areas in the world where they could have an impact.

A second research sub-question asked participants to describe the factors that influenced the decision-making process. By looking at the environmental position of one’s institutions, the findings suggest that external factors alerted the participants to the fact that a complex decision was forthcoming and that a decision-making model was needed so that he or she could arrive at the best alternative option. Overall, participants were able to cognize the financial, economic,
and socio factors impacting higher education and therefore, were able to identify the need to internationalize their campus.

**Seek alternative options.** In an effort to compensate for limitations as outlined by the theoretical framework, individuals sought out information through numerous avenues. Leaders arrived at a decision that was most optimal based on collecting information, examining alternatives, and striving to make the best decision possible. In other words, the decision-makers in this model compared the alternatives in a linear fashion until they arrived at the best alternative choice (Conlisk, 1996).

As such, all of the participants expressed strategies for collecting and seeking out information as they described their process for formulating complex decisions. A variety of methodologies were utilized in order to gather the necessary data. Participants described group-thinking, collaboration, and communication as significant approaches to how they search for alternative options.

One of the research sub-questions asked participants to describe how complex decisions are formulated. Balance reveals itself here as well and became an important factor that impacted the decision-making process among some of the participants. Through the perspective of bounded rationality, the lack of balance became a catalyst that required participants to continue to seek out alternatives until an equilibrium among stakeholders were met. In other instances, participants described the emotional factors that drove them to seek out more options. For example, participants described the strong sentiments they felt throughout the various stages of the decision-making process. In cases where there were feelings of uncertainty or fear, participants expressed the need to collect more information until they felt comfortable with the various options available. Interestingly, if the desired feeling was not satisfied, participants also
expressed their willingness to walk away from the decision, leaving themselves an exit strategy, and, as Jerry posits, the decision to not make a decision, is a decision in and of itself.

**Make a decision based on alternatives.** Bounded-rationality allows decision-makers to address a set of underlying assumptions and set limitations for how s/he will discuss the various constructs, variables, and values within a pre-established set of boundaries (Bacharach, 1989). Arriving at a point where the inquirer is either satisfied with the decision, or has maximized the search, it is time for the decision-maker to commit to a decision. Through this theoretical lens, the rationality of the decision-maker is limited by the amount of information they have (Simon, 1972; 1979). In almost all cases, participants expressed having to make a decision without having all of the desired information or having explored all of the available options due to limitations (i.e. time restraints). The findings suggest that in cases where complexity precludes omniscience, participants would establish a set of parameters by which to sort and formulate decisions. These structures included strategic, emotional, group, and procedural tactics. In most cases, participants described a satisficing approach to decision-making where the selected alternative contained more than one of these boundaries. In other words, participants described a conditional logic mindset for how they navigated complex decisions. For example, if the institution had the resources to allocate for such initiative, it was a financially responsible decision, it benefitted the stakeholders, and the college and/or the university president felt good about the option, then he or she would select that alternative as the best available choice. Because participants expressed not always having one hundred percent of the information prior to making decisions, the findings reveal that the participants were willing to adapt and adjust decisions after implementation and that the revisiting of a decision was expected.

Interestingly, in Rich’s and Cindy’s description of complex decision-making, the
participants appeared to have maximized the search function and have exhausted all of the avenues of collecting information. In their experiences, the participants were able to examine all of the available options in order to arrive at the most optimal choice. Once Rich and Cindy began to see repeating themes, they felt confident that they had enough data and therefore were able optimize their decision.

During this final phase of decision-making, participants addressed the fourth research sub-question and described the ways in which the deliberation process of internationalizing one’s campus represented rational choice versus a bounded rationality process. As a result, this study reveals the spectrum in which complex decisions are made, the role rationality plays in the decision-making process, the parameters by which decisions are bound, and the interconnectivity through which decision-making models are utilized.

**Discussion of the Findings in Relationship to the Literature Review**

When conducting the literature review, the researcher was most interested in understanding decision-making strategies in an effort to support the central research question. By arguing that the internationalization of higher education is a delicate, complicated, and multifaceted endeavor, the decision to internationalize portends to complex decision-making approaches.

According to the literature, financial, reputational, environmental, economic, and quality factors play a substantial role in the way in which colleges and universities make decisions and manage the internationalization process. Fundamental to this research is the premise that there is not a single model of internationalization (Chan & Dimmock, 2008) and therefore, requires a complex decision-making model that accounts for the multifarious variables that influence decisions and avows for the development of more than one possible outcome.
**Characteristics of complex decision-making.** Participants reveal that complex decision-making involves a variety of strategies and tactics which allow the decision-making agent to commit to a decision and select an available alternative. These attributes range from managing internal and external influences such as budgets, resources, stakeholder expectations, and the competitive environment of higher education, to relying on strategy, mission, and core values to filter through the numerous and available choices. This finding is significant because the essential structure of complex decision-making incorporates elements of other mature and well-established decision-making models. Therefore, it begs the question of whether or not complex decision-making, at its root, is different than other types of decision frameworks.

Harrison (1996) asserts that strategic decisions are highly complex because of the copious and dynamic variables involved in the process. In his study, Harrison (1996) focuses on decisions made by top executives noting that the top level of management are typically the people who most directly set the organization’s strategy. While some scholars refer to this model specifically as strategic decision-making (Mintzberg, 1987; Quinn, 1980) others have coined the approach as managerial decision-making highlighting a framework for formulating decisions (Tannenbaum, 1950; Bazerman & Moore, 2012). In harmony with the decision-making literature, this study involved interviews with top level executives in an effort to derive the essence of complex decision-making and the findings supports that these leaders incorporated strategic decision-making practices in their complex decision-making approaches.

Strategic decisions deal with the long-term health of the organization (Bass, 1983, as cited in Harrison, 1996) and, in an effort to assist top managers make successful strategic decisions, Shirley (1982) identified a five-step decision-making process as outlined by the following sequence:
1. The decision must be directed towards defining the organization’s relationship to the environment.

2. The decision must take the organization as a whole as the unit of analysis.

3. The decision must encompass all of the major functions performed by the organization.

4. The decision must provide constrained guidance for all of the administrative and operational activities of the organization.

5. The decision must be critically important to the long-term success of the total organization (p. 46).

Kotler and Murphy (1981) look specifically at strategic planning within the higher education space, and similarly, assert that strategic decision-making involves an analysis of the environment in terms of both the organization’s internal landscape (i.e., trustees, administrators, and faculty) as well as the external market environment (i.e., traditional/non-traditional students, alumni, sources of funding, and competition). This environmental scan is what Mintzberg (1987) refers to as “strategy as position” (p. 15) which is part of his five “p” approach to decision-making: plan, ploy, pattern, position, and perspective.

In concert with the literature, the six participants in this study revealed that when making complex decisions they incorporated these elements in their process which includes, but are not limited to, assessing their environment, elevating decisions to university wide levels, gathering information, sorting through the alternative choices, bearing in mind the long term health and sustainability of their organization and implementing a decision.

Moreover, scholars have studied how ethical factors influence choice (Stenmark & Mumford, 2011; Elm & Radin, 2012). The literature on ethical decision-making over the last
two decades has oscillated from understanding what factors impact leader behavior to more complex variables such as the interaction among people and their environment (Glover, Bumpus, Sharp, & Munchus, 2002). Maddalena (2007) developed a methodology for assisting CEO’s and top executives as they navigate the challenges associated with ethical decision-making. While ethical decision-making mainly is concerned with questions between right and wrong behaviors and one’s moral responsibility (Pojman, 1998, as cited in Maddalena, 2007), Maddalena (2007) asserts that decision-making, regardless of nomenclature, incorporates some ethical dimension. Maddalena’s (2007) process involves:

1. Assess/State the problem(s)
2. Gather information (relevant facts, environmental scan)
3. Verify problem
4. Identify the best possible outcome
5. List all options
6. Test each option (Is it legal? Will it withstand public scrutiny? Is it consistent with personal, professional, organizational and community values?)
7. Make a decision and implement
8. Evaluate
9. Resolution and follow up (pp. 72-74).

While Maddalena (2007) outlined a step-by-step process for ethical decision-making, Glover et al., (2002) suggest that ethical decision-making is further compounded by the role gender plays in the decision-making process. Their findings reveal that women were more likely to make ethical choices than their male counterparts, years of experiences was positively correlated with higher levels of ethical behavior, and high levels for achievement was positively correlated with
higher levels of ethical decision-making. Within the context of this study, some participants revealed ethical decision-making attributes, noting that some choices were a judgment call, while others enveloped a more altruistic perspective. Margo, for example, expressed the morally challenging and ethically driven factors that influenced her decision-making process as she contemplated the rhetorical question of “how one interacts in the world, and how one interacts in a world where shared values are not common”. Moreover, she questioned how “engagement in education, higher education in particular, is a positive good for the world, and [asks if it] is still a good when it isn’t perfect?”

These ethical questions complicate the decision-making process and suggest that ethical decision-making plays a role in how complex decisions are formulated. Although Maddalena’s (2007) process was designed as an ethical decision-making model, it shares similarities with the aforementioned strategic decision-making models and is congruent with the themes, subthemes, and findings of this current study.

Within the scope of individual decision-making processes, researchers have argued that the cognitive ability of individuals require them to adopt a more simplified approach to complex issues, thus limiting their capability of decision-making (Hart, 1992; Simon 1957; March 1978). In these situations, decision-makers often rely on cognitive maps or schemes in order to organize ideas into a manageable space and arrive at their decisions (Dutton & Jackson, 1987, as cited in Hart, 1992). The findings in this research study support the previous research in this field as participants described the ways in which they formulate their decisions and evaluate the available alternatives.

Bruijn and Heuvelhof (1999) found that the number of stakeholders involved in the decision-making process further compounded the decision-making process because of the
variance in interests and objectives. While the foundation of decision-making may be based on rational thought (Hart, 1992), the search and satisficing approaches, which may pacify all stakeholders, may not yield the best and most appropriate solutions in the context of complex situations. However, participants in this current study believed that group-thinking, group decision-making, collaboration, and communication with various constituencies, contributed to better decision-making practices when dealing with complicated topics. While the participants did not directly comment on the complicated nature of involving more decision-makers in the process, they did suggest that this decision-making scheme fostered better outcomes which outweighed the hurdles of variance in interests and objectives among stakeholders.

Within the context of the literature, these findings expound upon what is already known within the literature as participants reveal that making complex decisions involves a number of approaches. The participants describe decision-making in terms of strategy, group decision-making processes, emotional orientation, and procedural tactics which suggest that the essence of complex decision making is a compilation of pre-existing models.

**Changing emotions throughout the decision-making process.** The second finding from this study illustrates that decision-makers’ emotions appear to shift as they navigate the complex decision-making process. Cherniss, (2001) asserts that when information used to make a decision is incomplete and/or ambiguous, emotions can play a significant role in the decision-making process. Several of the participants revealed that during the initial phase of having to make a decision, they were confronted with several unknowns which compounded their decision-making process. When information is unknown, it may portend to the risks and uncertainty involved in the decision-making process and may cause decision-makers to feel uncomfortable. As illuminated in this study, several participants described experiencing strong
emotions as they transitioned through the various phases of decision-making. Margo was “terrified” because she lacked information. This prompted her to get involved and oversee every step of the decision-making process until she was no longer afraid. Nadler (1998) addresses the importance leadership plays throughout a change process like internationalization and posits that senior leaders must become ensconced in that process in order for it to be successful. Alternatively, Cindy’s emotional approach was realistic, though she asserts that having to make tough decisions are not always “pain free”. As participants began to gather information, their feelings of uncertainty started to dissipate and eventually, once participants found either a satisficing or optimal alternative with which they felt comfortable, they expressed confidence in their final decision. Additionally, other participants described the decision-making process in a more intuitive manner. Jerry described the qualitative challenges complex decision-making may evoke, asserting that sometimes decision-making can be a judgment, whereas Stephen described the emotional orientation of complex decision-making as one that should not compromise the decision-maker’s principles. As a result, these emotional feelings contributed to the way in which the participants were weighing alternative options and eventually selecting the best choice possible.

This finding is significant because several scholars have connected cognitive and psychological disciplines to decision-making strategies (Virlics, 2013; Menzel, 2013). Emotions provide a lens through which decision-making agents perceive and respond to an issue (Benson & Dresdow, 2003). Menzel (2013) makes the clear distinction between emotions and intuition noting that emotions are correlated to “affective states” relative to an object, person or behavior such as joy, fear, anger, surprise (p. 72). Alternatively, the same scholar defines intuition as answers that come to mind rapidly without intrusion of “thought, observation, or reason”
The findings in this study suggest that participants utilized a combination of both emotion and intuition as part of their complex decision-making process.

The role emotions play in decision-making has also been profoundly studied within the field of economics (Camerer, Loewenstein, & Prelec, 2005) as well as psychology (Dunn et al., 2010). Because emotions and human behavior portend to how people formulate decisions, Virlics (2013) posits the discourse is interdisciplinary and that “the emotions experienced during the decision-making process should be involved in the decision-making theory” (p. 1013).

Boyatzis and McKee (2005) assert that decision-makers “feel” before they “think” (as cited in McKenzie, Woolf, & van Winkelen, 2009, p. 213). This is evident in the experiences of Margo and Rich. Both participants described feelings of strong emotions at the onset of the decision-making process. In terms of internationalization, both participants acknowledged the competitive nature of global education and the various unknowns involved in operating in foreign nations. Moreover, other scholars agree that decisions are bound to emotions and have advanced the discussion by positing that emotions enable the decision-maker to prioritize alternatives (Buchanan & O’Connell, 2006; Boyatzis & McKee, 2005; McKenzie et al., 2009). The findings in this study support this literature as the participants experienced an emotional transformation throughout the searching, satisficing, and decision-making process.

Kahneman, (2011) agrees that emotions play a significant role in the decision-making process, however, their impact influences the decision-making only subconsciously. The findings in this study appear to be incongruent with Kahneman (2011) as participants appear to be cognizant of their emotional orientation and explicitly described complex decision-making in terms of how they felt during the various stages of the decision-making process. It wasn’t until
the participants experienced a positive shift in their emotional state, transitioning from fear to feeling comfortable, that they were then able to select an available option and make a decision.

Other scholars advocate that decision-making may be explored through neuroscience and that the brain employs a dual model approach to decision-making (Shafey, Rilling, Aronson, Nystrom, & Cohen, 2003; Frank, Cohen, & Sanfey, 2009; Evans & Over, 1996; Osman, 2004; Stanovich & West, 2000). The first process of this dual model is designed to work quickly and automatically where decision-making is often based on innate associations (Menzel, 2013). Alternatively, the second phase works slower and typically incorporates algorithms, formal logic and analytical thinking (Metcalfe & Mischel, 1999, as cited in Menzel, 2013). Phelps (2006) argues that the two systems of the brain are co-dependent and emotions cannot be separated from analytical thought. This current research supports Phelps’ (2006) assertion as the participants appear to apply dual-systems thinking whereby complex decisions are formulated through a series of both emotional transformations as well as strategic and procedural tactics that incorporate conditional and formal logic practices. Therefore, in support of the literature, and, through the lens of bounded rationality, Kaufman, (1999) would argue that emotions then become a limit by which decisions are bound.

**Linear and non-linear decision-making processes.** The third finding of this study suggests that complex decisions can involve both linear and non-linear processes. Bruijn and Heuvelhof (1999) posit that complex decision-making does not necessarily follow the sequence of identifying a problem and seeking a solution, but rather, it is a process driven by a solution which is appealing to the various stakeholders. The findings of this study support this literature as the participants described the internationalization of their campus as one of their objectives, that is to say, internationalization has become the solution followed by the complicated choices
that were involved in an effort to reach that end and satisfy stakeholders. The research sub-question asked how participants formulate complex decisions. The findings of this study suggests that while the four emergent themes of strategic decision-making, group decision-making, emotional orientation, and procedural processes were interconnected throughout the decision-making process, participants described their experience of navigating complex decisions both in terms of linear and non-linear methodologies.

What became most interesting was that while the participants were describing their experiences in chronological fashion, the data reveals the interconnectedness among all of the variables involved. One of the differentiating factors between simple linear decision-making models and non-linear complex decision-making strategies is that in complicated situations, decision-makers must be open to the versatility and continual changing environments in which their decisions are made (Snowden & Boone, 2007). This dynamic environment thus becomes another factor by which the participants’ decisions are limited.

The non-linearity of complex decision-making may be further compounded by the internal and external factors that influence the decision-making process. Complex environments rely on a network of structures that have multiple dependent and interdependent elements or agents that work with each other in a variety of ways (Mason, 2008; Gallagher & Appenzeller, 1991). Within the construct of complexity, Pascale, Milleman, and Gioja (2000) contend that decision-makers cannot follow a linear path since they are working in dynamic systems where they must adapt to their environment due to unforeseen or unpredictable consequences.

The non-sequential approach to complex decision-making can be seen through the interconnectivity among the themes and subthemes revealed in this study. Several participants indirectly referenced the non-linear process of complex decision-making in terms of testing out
an option, revisiting the decision, and making adjustments as necessary. College and university presidents described how changes in one variable may impact all other facets of the decision-making process. For example, participants revealed the interconnectedness between finances and resources as they developed their internationalization strategy. Moreover, there was overlap between group decision-making and the procedural strategies participants employed as they gathered data. As such, it can be deduced that the non-linear process of decision-making entails “evolution, development, and adaptation” (Morrison, 2002, as cited in Mason, 2008, p. 36).

Witte, Joost, and Thimm’s (1972) “Phase Theorem” approach to complex decision-making notes that the outcome depends not only on all of the variables involved, but also, the order in which the problems are solved. The complexity of a decision is therefore correlated to the number of agents, the timing in which the decision needs to be made, and the various internal and external stakeholders the decision impacts (Bennet & Bennet, 2008). This study supports the existing literature as the participants appear to describe the internationalization of their campus in terms of involving numerous decision-making agents though the process of group decision-making, the immediacy of needing to make a decision in order to enhance the sustainability of the institution and advance its mission and strategic plan, as well as vetting the ways in which these decisions impact all of the stakeholders, (i.e, alumni, students, faculty, staff, and trustees).

Interestingly, this study also suggests that participants may formulate complex decisions in a linear manner. While this finding is inconsistent with the literature, it is worth further exploration. Several participants suggest that they would only move forward with a decision if other elements contributing to that decision were already secured, thus revealing a sequential approach to decision-making. For example, financial responsibility, resources, and mission, emerged as some of the sub-themes during the data analysis process. Participants believed that
unless one, or more than one, of these sub-themes was accounted for, they would not proceed onto the next phase of the decision-making process. The linear approach can be seen through the participant’s description of how they navigated the complex decision of internationalizing their campus and assessed the strategic components that contributed to the actions they took.

Analogous to the linear decision-making processes as described by Mintzberg, Raisinghani, and Theoret (1976), participants also appeared to follow the linear path of bounded rationality which suggests the sequential phases of first recognizing the need to make a decision, followed by the search for potential options, and finally, concludes when the decision-maker has reached either a satisficing or optimal decision. This linear process is evidenced through the participants’ rich descriptions of how they noted their need to internationalize, their process for collecting information, how they interpreted the data, and finally their implementation of a strategic action plan. Throughout this sequential process, the participants’ experienced strong emotional shifts as they navigated the decision-making process.

This is an important finding because the majority of the literature posits that complex decision-making can take on circuitous processes and typically involves more than one best answer. While this understanding of complex decision-making is supported through this research, this study also suggests that formulating complex decisions are not limited to non-linear methods. The findings from this study suggest that participants believe that there is a consecutive approach to complex decision making which involves fluidly moving through the strategic and procedural decision-making processes so that one’s emotions may evolve and the best alternative option is selected.

**Summary.** The purpose of this qualitative phenomenological study was to explore the complex decision-making processes inherent to internationalizing college and university
campuses. By capturing the essence of how college and university presidents describe their experiences navigating the dynamic decision-making arena, the findings from this study suggest that college and university presidents incorporate strategic, participatory, emotional, and procedural processes. The four themes, 12-subthemes, and three findings suggest that senior higher education leaders incorporate rational choice into their deliberation and decision-making process, but are limited by their environments and emotions, which preclude them from acquiring all of the information necessary to make an optimal decision. Therefore, the college and university presidents who participated in this study were cognizant of their emotional orientation and utilized strategic and group decision-making practices as well as procedural tactics in an effort to arrive at the best alternative choice possible and thus selected a satisficing alternative. Because these alternatives are not optimal, the participants were willing to revisit their decisions and were open to making amendments and enhancements as necessary.

**Discussion of Findings in Relationship to the Research Design**

The descriptive phenomenological research design utilized for this study successfully transformed the lived experiences of six college and university presidents and extrapolated the essence of complex decision-making within the context of internationalization. Phenomenology provides the researcher with a means of exploring and uncovering the essential structures of consciousness as experienced by the first-person’s point of view (Smith, 2008). Through a critical sampling technique, the researcher was able to identify college and university presidents who had first-hand experience with the phenomenon under investigation. Through in-person, in-depth, one-on-one interviews with the six participants, descriptive phenomenology offered the researcher a rigorous and precocious methodology for capturing the essence between participant and worldly circumstances (Giorgi, 2009).
The phenomenological methodology complements the data analysis process that exposed meaning by identifying themes and patterns. Composing the essential structure of complex decision-making became a way of understanding the unity among raw data. The researcher assumed a psychological mindset throughout the study thus implying an intentional delimitation, and was therefore, able to focus on the meaning units which offered rich significance. Through free imaginative variation, the researcher was able to hone in on meaning and the diverse facts and details that contribute to the phenomenon (Giorgi, 2009). From this process, four themes and 12 sub-ordinate themes emerged from the transcriptions.

The findings from this study provided a sublime understanding into the ways in which college and university presidents navigate the complex decision-making process with regards to internationalization. College and university presidents expressed the dynamic and versatile environment in which they are operating. Because of globalization, higher education is in a unique position where college and university presidents are placed in a high-stakes, competitive global market. As institutional leaders embarked upon their internationalization initiatives, they revealed rare discernment into their lived experience of making complex decisions.

First, the participants believed that strategic decisions were essential to the complex decision-making process. While there were some variances among the six participants, they each referenced a minimum of one characteristic associated with strategic decision-making which lends itself to be considered a necessary component of the phenomenon. The college and university presidents adopted a mission-driven lens through which they weighed the various available choices and instituted criteria for measuring and allocating resources and finances as part of their innovative internationalization strategy.
Secondly, participants expressed that complex decision-making was not an individual task. The participants placed a high value on group thinking by generating buy-in and implementing collaborative communication processes. Additionally, participants expressed their desire to achieve balance at the various levels within the organization. Because the decisions at hand were of complicated nature, gathering multiple perspectives and engaging internal and external constituencies was essential. Therefore, group decision-making provided the college and university presidents with additional opportunities of optimizing alternatives to the best extent possible.

Thirdly, because one hundred percent of the information could never be obtained due to time restraints or unknowns about future environments, participants revealed that complex decision-making also incorporated the recognition of one’s emotional state. Participants reflected on their feelings both at the onset of when a decision arose, during the process, and at the conclusion of when they selected an available option. Through the participants’ rich descriptions of their experience, the changing emotions they encountered during the decision-making process lent it to being a critical aspect of how complex decisions are formulated.

Finally, the fourth theme that emerged from the data provided insight into the ways in which participants sought out information and how they organized and processed the data in an effort to arrive at a satisficing decision. Because complex decisions may have more than one correct outcome, participants believed that collecting as much information as possible, through numerous methods, and utilizing a strategy for sorting through the data were critical. This theme is closely related to the aforementioned findings, as it supports the notion that complex decision-making is not individualized, and suggests that the essence of complex decision-making requires strategic thought, group involvement, emotional change, and process oriented approaches.
Implications

Theory. One of the overarching goals of this study was to understand what the characteristics of rational choice among college and university presidents were in situations where complexity precludes omniscience. From a bounded rational choice perspective, this study offered a deeper understanding of how senior leaders made decisions within their environment (structure), and from these constructs, sought out alternative options, and developed preferences in order to make decisions regarding internationalization. By exploring the essence of complex decision-making and understanding where on the spectrum of optimization and satisficing complex decisions lie, the findings from this study support the decision-making theories and literature, and continue to challenge the psychological, behavioral, and neuroscience aspects which influence choice. This work contributes to the discussion of bounded rationality and further supports the work of Simon (1972) and March (1978).

Research. Another goal of this research study was to employ a descriptive phenomenological method to uncover the essence of complex decision-making by giving voice to college and university presidents in their daily environments. Therefore, this work contributes to the larger scholarly community through the application of Giorgi’s (2009) descriptive phenomenological approach which is rooted in the field of psychology. This phenomenological design required the researcher to set aside her beliefs and bias towards the phenomenon, to the greatest extent possible, and capture the lived experiences of the participants. By utilizing the college and university presidents’ descriptive account of their experience, and, through free imaginative variation, the researcher was able to transform what was implicit, to explicit, by assigning a psychological value to the data (Laverty, 2003; Giorgi, 2008) and revealing meanings that were lived but not necessarily articulated (Giorgi, 2008, p. 35).
The results of this research may significantly contribute to the field of the social sciences due to its unique interdisciplinary blend of higher education, decision-making, and psychology. This study may provide additional value and advance the management literature because of the study’s focus on process rather than outcome. The findings from this research may also enhance the existing literature through its qualitative application to decision-making and provide a platform for future research on exploring how college and university leaders make decisions through the lens of bounded rationality.

**Practice.** Finally, the results of this study may assist senior leaders both in higher education as well as other fields understand the interconnectivity of both linear and non-linear processes associated with complex decision-making as they endeavor to internationalize their organization. The findings may also assist practitioners in understanding how complex decisions are formulated when perfect or complete information is not available, and provide them with a process by which they may understand the constructs that influence decisions, and the search and satisficing manner in which complicated choices are made. Additionally, this study may also inform practice through the decision-making techniques revealed by the participants such as group thinking and strategic practices.

By conducting one-on-one in-depth interviews with college and university presidents, this narrative gives credence to the complicated and versatile environment in which higher education is positioned and the findings offer perspicacity into the decision-making process for how institutional leaders navigate rational choice within the limitations of bounded rationality. Furthermore, the findings bring to light the relationship between thinking styles and preference, thus suggesting that decision-makers should be aware of how emotions oscillate throughout the decision-making process and how that impacts their choices.
Limitations

As an example of qualitative descriptive phenomenological design, this study does not purport to offer empirical generalizability of how all college and university presidents navigate the complex decision-making landscape with regards to the internationalization of their respective campuses. The purpose of this research was not to prescribe a decision-making model for how complex problems should be solved, but rather, to garner a deeper understanding of, and discover how, institutional leaders experience the phenomenon. As a result, I suggest that the reader should consider the findings presented and determine if a complex decision-making process, one that incorporates strategic decision-making, group decision-making, emotional orientation, and procedural tactics, is applicable for solving his or her complex problem.

Additionally, given the nature of qualitative phenomenological research, another limitation to this study is one of subjectivity. While phenomenologists do admit that a first-person study is subjective (Giorgi, 2009), it remains objective through its practice of excluding biases via phenomenological reduction (Gallagher, 2012). Therefore, readers should determine if the data provides rich thick descriptions and whether the analysis and synthesis are adequately aligned, before applying these findings to his or her own setting (Reissman, 2008).

While this study offered a critical sampling technique, it is worth noting that the types of higher education institutions showcased in this study reflected the spectrum of colleges and universities in the U.S. ranging from small private colleges and larger research orientated universities, to religious affiliated institutions. For the purpose of this study, the researcher selected six college and university presidents which saturated the data; four male, two female. It is important to note that the complex decision-making experiences may be significantly different between genders and that a larger sample may furnish different results. Additionally, individuals
may have different thinking preferences which were not incumbent to this study, but offer an important avenue for future research.

Conclusion

The purpose of this study was to explore the complex decision-making processes inherent to internationalizing college and university campuses. This was achieved by capturing the essence of how college and university presidents describe their experiences navigating the dynamic decision-making arena with regard to internationalization. Using descriptive phenomenology, the researcher discovered that the college and university presidents involved in this study revealed the following themes and sub-themes which helped to shape the structure of complex decision-making:

a. Strategic decision-making
   i. Financial responsibility
   ii. Resources
   iii. Mission driven
   iv. Innovation

b. Group decision-making
   i. Collaboration via process
   ii. Collaboration via communication
   iii. Balance

c. Emotional orientation
   i. Transformation
   ii. Altruism
   iii. Competition
d. Procedural strategies

   i. Collection information

   ii. Processing information

All six participants had individual and unique experiences of how they navigated complex decisions. However, through a prescriptive methodology, the researcher was able to uncover the patterns within the raw data in an effort to provide meaning and express the essence of the phenomenon. The findings from this study were explored through the theoretical lens of bounded rationality and contribute to the scholarship within the fields of higher education and management. The relationship between the findings and the theoretical framework exposed similarities within the existing literature as well as identified areas where future research may be warranted.

To expound upon the findings from this study, researchers may be interested to understand if there is a correlation between the four major themes found in this research and the four quadrants of the brain that make up the thinking preferences of college and university presidents and advance the literature on complex decision-making as it relates to neuroscience. Utilizing the Whole Brain thinking framework, and the Herrmann Brain Dominance Instrument (HBDI), researchers may be able to ascertain if a relationship exists between the qualitative findings of this study which reveal the essence of complex decision-making, and the areas of the brain that illustrate thinking preferences in terms of; quadrant A which is logical-analytical-quantitative, quadrant B which is organized- sequential- detailed, quadrant C which is interpersonal sensory-kinesthetic and quadrant D which prefers more innovative-holistic and conceptual thinking models.
Another line of inquiry that researchers may explore would be the role gender plays in decision-making. Through comparative analysis, researchers may further the findings of this research by replicating this study and restricting their participants to a single gender. As more women continue to take on higher education presidential appointments, understanding the commonalities and differences among gender, in terms of male and female decision-making processes, would provide additional insights into how college and university presidents navigate complicated matters when information is not omniscient.

Finally, researchers may also look at how college and university presidents outside of the United States make complex decisions and the role culture plays in decision-making strategies. These are just a few of the various avenues where additional research could be fostered in an effort to explore how institutional leaders navigate complex decision with regard to internationalization.
Appendices

Appendix A: General Participant Recruitment Letter

Dear President ________________.

My name is Laura Carfang, and I am a doctoral candidate at Northeastern University, in Boston, Massachusetts and also the Assistant Director of the Part-Time MBA programs at Babson College in Wellesley, Massachusetts. My doctoral focus is in higher education administration with a particular interest in exploring complex decision-making models. Specifically, I am conducting a qualitative phenomenological study that explores the lived experiences of college and university presidents as they perambulate the complex decision-making processes inherent to the internationalization of their institutions.

I am writing to you to formally request your participation in my dissertation study. As a leader of an exceptional institution that is nationally recognized for its internationalization initiatives, and one that has demonstrated a commitment to educating and preparing students for the globalized world, makes you an ideal and unique participant for this study.

While internationalization has been explored through a variety of lenses with regards to student learning outcomes, redesigning curricula, and motivational drivers, there is a dearth of scholarship that addresses the complex decision-making processes associated with internationalization. Therefore, the value you would bring to this study would advance the literature in the field and contribute to the understanding of how institutional leaders formulate complex decision-making strategies. Additionally, your contribution to this research will assist scholars and practitioners in the fields of organizational leadership, decision-making, and international education, garner insights into the complexities of internationalization that may not have been as explicit in previous work.

Your participation in this study is completely voluntary and you have the right to withdraw from it at any time, even after the research has commenced. For the purposes of this research, I would like to request between 45 and 90 minutes of your time where I would be able to conduct an in-depth, one-on-one interview and ask you a few open-ended and semi-structured questions with regards to decision-making and internationalization; with your permission, I would also like to record the interview. Your identity and institution will remain confidential and pseudonyms will be utilized to protect confidentiality. Moreover, all recordings, notes, and transcriptions will be discarded within 5 years of completing this study.

I would be truly grateful if you would consider participating in this nascent study. I would be more than happy answer any questions you have about your participation, or the research under investigation at any time. Additionally, I would like to make this opportunity as easy and convenient for you as possible. I would be happy to meet you anywhere that works for you. Upon your acceptance of this offer and agreement to participate, an informed consent and additional details regarding this study will be provided. If you could kindly let me know of your interest in participating in this research study and your availability during the first quarter, 2014,
it would be greatly appreciated. Please feel free to contact me either by phone at: 773-490-7142, or via e-mail at: Carfang.L@husky.neu.edu.

If you have any questions about my research or this study, you may also feel free to contact my primary advisor and Principal Investigator, Dr. Jane Lohmann by phone at (617)373-6274, or by email at jlohm@neu.edu.

Thank you again for your time and consideration and I look forward to hearing from you.

Sincerely,

Laura Carfang
Doctoral Candidate, Higher Education Administration, Northeastern University
Appendix B: Recruitment Email Follow Up

Dear ________________,

My name is Laura Carfang, and I am a doctoral candidate at Northeastern University, and also the Assistant Director of the Part-Time MBA programs at Babson College. I would like to take this time to follow up with you regarding the formal invitation to participate in my dissertation research, which you should have received last week. As you may recall, my doctoral focus is in higher education administration with a particular interest in exploring complex decision-making models. Specifically, I am conducting a qualitative phenomenological study that explores the lived experiences of college and university presidents as they navigate the complex decision-making processes inherent to the internationalization of their institutions.

Please let me know if you would like to participate in the study and I would be more than happy to coordinate schedules so that we can confirm a date and time to review informed consent forms, answer any outstanding questions, and conduct a one-on-one interview lasting between 45 and 90 minutes. Your participation is entirely voluntary.

If you are unable to participate in this research, would you be willing to recommend any colleagues that may be interested?

Thank you again for your time and I look forward to hearing from you.

Sincerely,

Laura Carfang
Doctoral Candidate, Higher Education Administration, Northeastern University
Appendix C: Recruitment Phone Call Follow Up (Verbal Script)

Hello _____________________.

My name is Laura Carfang, and I am a doctoral candidate at Northeastern University, and also the Assistant Director of the Part-Time MBA programs at Babson College. I thought I would call and follow up with you regarding the formal invitation to participate in my research, which you should have received last week. As you may recall, my doctoral focus is in higher education administration with a particular interest in exploring complex decision-making models. Specifically, I am conducting a qualitative phenomenological study that explores the lived experiences of college and university presidents as they navigate the complex decision-making processes inherent to the internationalization their institutions.

I am calling to inquire if you have any questions about my request as well as ask if you have given any additional consideration to participating? Your participation is entirely voluntary.

[The script will emerge depending on the way in which the respondent answers the above questions]

Sincerely,

Laura Carfang
Doctoral Candidate, Higher Education Administration, Northeastern University
Appendix D: Unsigned Informed Consent

45 CFR 46 117(c) In certain instances, an IRB may waive the requirement for the investigator to obtain a signed consent form for some or all subjects. In cases in which the documentation requirement is waived, the IRB may require the investigator to provide subjects with a written statement regarding the research. **Only the IRB can waive or modify the consent process. Researchers are not authorized to make this decision.** When a signed informed consent is not required, this consent form may be given to participants to keep. Please modify the following information as necessary.

Northeastern University, Department: College of Professional Studies

**Name of Investigator(s):**
Dr. Jane Lohmann, Ed.D., Principal Investigator,  
Laura Carfang, Candidate Ed.D. Northeastern University

**Title of Project:** Choices, Decisions, and the Call to Take Action: A Phenomenological Study Utilizing Bounded Rationality to Explore Decision-Making Processes

**Informed Consent to Participate in a Research Study**
You are being invited to take part in a research study. This form will tell you about the study, but I will explain it to you first. You may ask me any questions that you have. When you are ready to make a decision, you may tell me if you want to participate or not. You do not have to participate if you do not want to. If you decide to participate, I will ask you to sign this statement and will give you a copy to keep.

**Why am I being asked to take part in this research study?**
You are being asked to participate in this study because you are a leader of an exceptional college and/or university that is nationally recognized for its internationalization initiatives, and one that has demonstrated a commitment to educating and preparing students for the globalized world.

**Why is this research study being done?**
The purpose of this research is take a closer look at complex decision-making strategies in the context of internationalization in order to develop a better understanding of how leaders of organizations formulate complex decisions.

**What will I be asked to do?**
If you decide to take part in this study, I will ask you to participate in one, one-on-one, in-depth interview with me, Laura Carfang. I will ask you a series of open-ended and semi-structured questions which will last between 45 and 90 minutes. Given the nature of this research, additional questions may emerge organically throughout the 45-90 minutes depending on your responses to the initial question. For example, I may ask for further details about an experience, event, emotion, or situation that you mentioned; I may also ask for further clarification. With your permission, the interview will be recorded on a digital devise. At the end of the interview, I will ask if there is anything else you would like to include or comment on. I may also ask you to recommend any additional college and/or university presidents that you think may be interested in participating in this dissertation study.
**Where will this take place and how much of my time will it take?**

We will meet one-on-one in person, or by phone, Google Hangout, Skype, or WebEx if proximity prevents us from meeting in person, at whatever time and wherever is most convenient for you within the first quarter of 2014. The interview will last between 45-90 minutes.

**Identify any reasonable foreseeable risks, harms, discomforts or inconvenience that the participant may experience**

Your participation in this study is completely voluntary. Even after the research has started, you may withdraw at any time. You may choose to not answer any of the interview questions, at any time. There are no foreseeable risks, discomfort, or harm as an outcome of this research study. However, should you experience any emotional discomfort when describing your experiences, you are encouraged to utilize your institution’s Counseling Services. Because there are no foreseeable risks or harm for participating in this study, special arrangements will not be made for compensation or for payment of treatment because you have participated in this research.

**Will I benefit by being in this research?**

There will be no financial compensation or direct benefit to you for participating in this study. However, the information you share as a college/university president may help advance the scholarship on decision-making and internationalization.

**Who will see the information about me?**

Your information will be confidential. Laura Carfang (the researcher) will record the interview on a digital recorder and will transcribe the interview using a pseudo name for both you and your institution. Once the transcriptions are complete, the audio files will be discarded. At that point, your identity as a participant in this study will not be known. That means no one, not even the researcher, will know that the answers you give are from you. All transcriptions will be saved on a password protected computer in Laura’s home office. Laura will also back up the files on an external hard drive and keep the hard drive in a locked file cabinet. The data will be stored in a secured location for up to 5 years, at which point Laura will discard the data appropriately. In rare instances, authorized people may request to see research information about you and other people in this study. This is done only to be sure that the research is done properly. I would only permit people who are authorized by organizations such as the Northeastern University Institutional Review Board, or my dissertation advisory committee to see this information.

**If I do not want to take part in the study, what choices do I have?**

Your participation in this study is voluntary. You may choose to not take part in this study at any time.

**What will happen if I suffer any harm from this research?**

There are no physical, psychological, social, financial risks for participating in this study. Therefore, no special arrangements will be made for compensation or for payment for treatment solely because of my participation in this research.
**Can I stop my participation in this study?**

Your participation in this research is completely voluntary. You do not have to participate if you do not want to and you can refuse to answer any question. Even if you begin the study, you may quit at any time. You will not lose any rights, benefits, or services that you would otherwise have if you do not participate in the study.

**Who can I contact if I have questions or problems?**

If you have any questions about this study, please feel free to contact me, Laura Carfang, by phone at 773-490-7142 or by email at Carfang.l@husky.neu.edu, who is the person mainly responsible for the research. You can also contact Laura’s primary advisor, Jane Lohmann, Ed.D at jloehmann@neu.edu.

**Who can I contact about my rights as a participant?**

If you have any questions about your rights in this research, you may contact Nan C. Regina, Director, Human Subject Research Protection, 960 Renaissance Park, Northeastern University, Boston, MA 02115. Tel: 617.373.4588, Email: n.regina@neu.edu.

**Will I be paid for my participation?**

There will be no financial compensation for participating in this study.

**Is there anything else I need to know?**

You must be at least 18 years old to participate unless your parent or guardian gives written permission.

I agree to take part in this research.

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Signature of person agreeing to take part  
_________________________________________  Date ______________________________

Printed name of person above

_________________________________________  Date ______________________________

Signature of person who explained the study to the participant above and obtained consent

_________________________________________  

Printed name of person above
Appendix E: Interview Protocol

Introductory Questions:
- Could you please tell me about some of the internationalization efforts your institution has engaged in during your time as president?

Interview Questions

IQ 1: Can you tell me a time (or the first time) you realized you had to either start or grow the internationalization efforts at your institution?

IQ 2: Can you please describe, as detailed as possible, a situation in which you experienced having to make a complex decision related to internationalization?

IQ 3: Can you please describe any challenges you had to confront in order to make that decision?

IQ 4: Can you describe the type of decisions that you think need to be made or considered in order to internationalize a college or university campus? (For example, were there specific decisions that needed to be made prior to, during, and after engaging and implementing an internationalization strategy?)

IQ 5: Please elaborate on the factors that had to be considered in making the decision to internationalize your campus? (i.e., where there internal and external factors that needed to be considered?)

IQ 6: Did one factor play more of a significant role than the others? In other words, how do you weigh all of the components that drove your decision?

IQ 7: Can you please elaborate on, and describe, your thought process during that situation? (i.e., to internationalize your campus?)

IQ 8: Can you please describe any tools, or mechanisms/devises that you use in order to arrive at those decisions?
  - Is one tool or technique more helpful than another?

IQ 9: Can you please describe how you went about obtaining the necessary information you needed in order to arrive at your decision?
  - How did you know when you had enough information in order to make a choice?

IQ 10: Can you identify any information that was unknown at the time you had to make that certain decision?
If you had known this information, in hindsight, would it have changed the outcome of your decision? How so?

**IQ 11** If applicable - How do these unknown variables impact your decision-making process?

**IQ 12** Is there anything else you would like to add to our discussion that we have not yet covered?

Please note that this interview protocol is a guide in order to assist the researcher answer her research questions and that qualitative research does allow for new questions to emerge which may not appear in this protocol.
Appendix F: IIE Permissions to use Graphs

On Thu, Dec 26, 2013 at 1:08 AM, iieresearch <IIERESEARCH@iie.org> wrote:

You may reprint these figures as long as you properly cite the Institute of International Education and Open Doors Report on International Educational Exchange.

IIE Research

www.iie.org/mobility
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