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The purpose of this study was to examine the factors that cause women in community college executive leadership positions to detour from their original career plans. It looked at how women leaders in community colleges responded emotionally, cognitively, and behaviorally to interruptions/barriers in their career paths toward community college leadership.

Phase I consisted of a series of telephone interviews with a sample of 22 women vice presidents and presidents purposefully selected from across the United States. The purpose of Phase I was to gather information about the women's perceptions of events that caused them to either put their careers on hold or to forego advancement temporarily.

Phase II consisted of a survey based on the trends identified from the interviews. Eighty-five women in executive leadership positions at community colleges were asked to select responses that best described their personal experiences with career detours. The purpose of Phase II was to understand the roles that age, support groups, attitude, and personal inner strength played in surviving career detours for these women. A chi-square test was used on responses to pairs of questions to determine if the distribution of these paired responses could be explained by chance alone. To investigate the effect of age and experience on women's perceptions regarding career detours, the response data were analyzed using a series of t-tests on the proportion of "yes" answers.

The findings from this research indicate that with the exception of needing an advanced degree to move ahead professionally, women leaders in community colleges

faced many of the same career roadblocks and detours encountered by women in the corporate world. What distinguished women in community college leadership was their optimism that they would be successful even though it might take longer to reach their career goals than they originally planned. Their optimism was based on support from family and colleagues, emotional intelligence and endurance, experience and wisdom that come with age, the accepting environment of community colleges, and a resilient inner strength.

PERCEPTIONS AND REACTIONS TO CAREER BARRIERS

AMONG WOMEN IN EXECUTIVE LEADERSHIP ROLES

AT COMMUNITY COLLEGES

by

Diann Parker Back

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Approved by

_____
Dr. Gerald Ponder, Committee Chair

APPROVAL PAGE

This dissertation has been approved by the following committee of the

Faculty of The Graduate School at The University of North Carolina at Greensboro.

Committee Chair _____
Gerald Ponder, Ph.D.

Committee Members _____
Larry Coble, Ed.D.

_____
David Ayers, Ed.D.

_____
Jewell Cooper, Ph.D.

___March 12, 2007_____
Date of Acceptance by Committee

___March 12, 2007_____
Date of Final Oral Examination

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CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

A few decades ago, it was almost unthinkable to imagine a woman as the

president of an Ivy League college, the editor of a national magazine, an astronaut, a

Supreme Court justice, or a presidential Cabinet member. The reality today is that

women are eager and highly qualified to fill these positions and many more, including

executive leadership positions in community colleges. An article in *Community College*

Week illustrates the progress women have made in assuming executive leadership

positions in community colleges.

Within all higher education institutions, including two-year colleges, the

percentage of women presidents doubled between 1986 and 1998, from 9.5 percent to 19

percent, according to the American Council of Education's Office of Women in Higher

Education. The highest percentage—22.4 percent—are at community colleges. A study

by the American Association of Community Colleges shows that one-third of all

community college presidents hired during the 1997-1998 school year were women.

(Lane, 2002, p. 5)

Obviously, women need to be ambitious if they want to advance their careers.

Anna Fels, author of *Necessary Dreams* (2004), studied what ambition means for women.

After extensive interviews with articulate and well-educated women, she came to the

conclusion that ambition for women and men is made up of content mastery of a special

skill and the appreciation of an evaluating and encouraging audience (p. 6). Gilbert Brim

(1992) expands on this definition of ambition for both men and women. "I believe we are not content with what we already know and can do; we want action and growth-opportunities to explore our competence and mastery. Young or old, we want to be challenged. We want to shape, form, and build our own lives" (p. 48).

Fels (2004) defines recognition as "being valued by others for qualities that we experience and value in ourselves; it involves appreciation by another person that feels accurate and meaningful to the recipient" (p. 9). The author notes, "The recognition may come as applause, a raise, a pat on the back, a change in title, a compliment by a boss or colleague, a good grade" (p. 13). Fels (2004) comments that recognition given for experience and skills is different from other forms of attention.

In her interviews, Fels (2004) discovered, "There is no evidence that the desires to acquire skills and to receive affirmation for accomplishments are less present in women than in men….The difference is in how they create, reconfigure, and realize…their goals" (p. 6).

Fels (2004) summarizes her thesis by saying that when mastery of skills and recognition are balanced, they form healthy and productive forces to fuel ambition (pp. 14-15). However, according to this author, "Many factors intervene to divert, reshape, or undermine women's ambitions as they proceed through their adult lives" (p. 29). This idea of women's drive for success being interrupted by numerous factors forms the basis for the conceptual framework of this study—the perceived career barriers that disrupt women's drives to executive leadership in community colleges.

Research abounds on barriers to ambition for women in the corporate sector, but with the exception of the 2002 doctoral research done by Dr. Kandi Deitemeyer, now provost at Kentucky's Gateway Community and Technical Community College, little has been written about those same obstacles for women who hold executive leadership positions in community colleges. Deitemeyer's study focused on "developing a descriptive and analytic profile of female presidents in community colleges, identifying perceived variables with potential to hinder or support females' ascension to community college presidencies, measuring overall job satisfaction and identifying career aspirations" (Bagnato, 2005, p. 9).

In this study, women leaders in community colleges often experienced some of the same barriers as their corporate colleagues, but somehow, many of them still got to their destinations—it just took longer than they originally expected.

Conceptual Framework

Fels is a practicing psychiatrist and faculty member at Cornell University's Weill Medical College in New York City. She has written for the *New York Times Book Review*, the *Times Literary Supplement, The Nation, Self* and the *Science Times* section of the *New York Times*. Her recent book, *Necessary Dreams: Ambition in Women's Changing Lives*, provided the conceptual framework for this study of the factors that intervened to alter or hinder women's ambitions, especially women's careers as community college leaders and how women in both the corporate and educational sectors reacted to these detours in their career plans.

In her interviews with women as well as with men, Fels (2004) found that ambition and recognition are "the motivational engines that [drive] the development of almost any skill" (p. 6). When asked about their childhood ambitions, both men and women responded in clear direct terms about the limitless possibilities of their dreams. "In nearly all of the childhood ambitions, two undisguised elements were joined together. One was a mastery of a special skill: writing, dancing, acting, diplomacy. The other was recognition: attention from an appreciative audience…fame, status, acclaim, praise, or honor" (Fels, 2004, p. 6). The author continues by noting, "That the first of these—mastery—was fundamental to ambition seemed nearly incontrovertible. Without mastery, a picture of the future isn't an ambition; it's simply wishful thinking…luck or fate" (Fels, 2004, p. 7). The author summarizes, "Ambition requires an imagined future that can be worked toward by the development of skills and expertise" (Fels, 2004, p. 7).

Fels (2004) goes on to say, "Doing a thing well can be a reward in and of itself. The delight provided by mastering a skill repays the effort of learning it. But the pursuit of mastery over an extended period of time requires a specific context: An encouraging audience must be present for skills to develop" (p. 8). Robbins (2003) states this assumption another way when he summarizes the motivation theory known as expectancy theory. He says, "The strength of a tendency to act in a certain way depends on the strength of an expectation that the act will be followed by a given outcome and on the attractiveness of that outcome to the individual" (p. 52). In other words, people continue to drive toward their goals as long as they perceive that the outcome is

worthwhile. That drive is strengthened by recognition from an audience whose opinion they value.

However, when Fels wanted to talk about ambition in the adult lives of the women with whom she spoke, she found that they were extremely reluctant to mention that specific word. "For them, 'ambition' necessarily implied egotism, selfishness, self-aggrandizement, or the manipulative use of others for one's own ends. None of them would admit to being ambitious" (Fels, 2004, p. 5). In contrast, the men in her interviews considered ambition as a "necessary and desirable part of their lives" (Fels, 2004, p. 5).

If women enjoyed mastering a skill as children and looked forward to recognition for such mastery, why did they downplay their deserved recognition for mastery of career skills as adults? Analyzing responses to her interview questions, Fels (2004) concluded, "We are not used to thinking of recognition as a fundamental emotional need, particularly in adulthood. It's nice when you get it, but if you don't, it's not the end of the world—life goes on" (p. 7). However, the reality is that "Throughout our life, recognition by others defines us to ourselves, energizes us, directs our efforts" (Fels, 2004, p. 10).

Individuals naturally expect recognition for their career accomplishments from their close families and friends, but it is in the public sphere that women tend to shun the spotlight and give "long-winded, evasive, contradictory, and confused responses" to explain their career success (Fels, 2004, p. 4). They use euphemisms about being able to take advantage of an opportunity, being in the right place at the right time, having good luck, doing one's personal best, or doing the right thing. Fels (2004) cites Katharine Graham, publisher of the *Washington Post*, as an example of the contrast between how

women and men view recognition. Graham took a "highly principled stand on the Watergate political crisis [when] she chose to publish information despite potentially severe legal repercussions" (Fels, 2004, p. 26). She said, "I have often been credited with courage for backing our editors in Watergate. The truth is that I never felt there was much choice. Courage applies only when there is choice….Once I found myself in the deepest water in the middle of the current, there was no turning back" (Fels, 2004, p. 26). In contrast, her editor, Ben Bradlee, "who did not have to make the ultimate decision or take responsibility for publishing the Watergate story, expressed no such compunction. He felt free to take pleasure in and credit for his role in the events" (Fels, 2004, p. 26). He said, "We went after Woodward and Bernstein like prosecutors, demanding to know word for bloody word what each source had said in reply to what questions, not the general meaning but the exact words. Then I finally said, 'Go'" (Fels, 2004, pp. 26-27). This example illustrates that men expect and accept recognition for their accomplishments, but women often deny that they pursue or take pleasure in the recognition or power that their work produces (Fels, 2004, p. 24).

Why do successful women like Graham deny their need for recognition that their mastery brings them? Fels (2004) contends that although women feel like they have broken through the "glass ceiling," there is still another barrier because in both the public and private spheres:

> Women are facing the reality that in order to be seen as feminine, they must provide or relinquish resources—including recognition—to others. It is difficult for women to confront and address the unspoken mandate that they subordinate needs for recognition to those of others—particularly men. The expectation is so

deeply rooted in the [white, middle class] culture's ideas of femininity that it is largely unconscious. (p. 48)

Fels (2004) scoffs at the idea that women are "intrinsically different in their needs and style" from men (p. 40), and therefore, do not have the same needs for recognition as their male counterparts. The author continues to counter the argument:

Women, after all, may be just less interested in personal attention than men. Or maybe they simply don't care about the types of recognition that men strive for. It has been suggested, for example, that women have a greater capacity for empathy than men, making it more painful for them not to gratify the wishes of others or relinquish coveted resources. (Fels, 2004, p. 40)

Thus, for women recognition becomes an intangible but vitalizing element in their professional and personal development. It is often denied them because of the conflicting roles they are expected to play unconsciously by both society and by themselves. Often, the path to a woman's career goal is interrupted by cultural expectations of femininity either self-imposed or pressed on her by outside forces beyond her control.

Using Fels' work with the role of recognition in fulfilling ambition as its conceptual framework, this study looked at what women in both the corporate and higher educational sectors perceived as detours and temporary barriers to their ambition or career goals, especially women in executive leadership roles in community colleges, and how they dealt with those barriers as they sought to fulfill their ambitions.

Statement of the Problem

There are numerous studies on the subject of women's quest to fulfill their ambitions in the corporate sector; however, little has been done to study the fulfillment and accompanying barriers to intended career paths for women in the community college setting. The problem for this study was to describe the patterns and the results of temporary barriers to intended career paths for women in executive leadership positions in community colleges.

Research Questions

1. What factors cause women in community college leadership positions to detour from their original career plans in community college administration?

2. A. What do women in community college executive leadership perceive as intervening factors diverting, reshaping, or undermining their career plans in community college executive leadership?

   B. What are the similarities and dissimilarities with women in executive? leadership positions in the corporate sector?

3. How do women leaders in community colleges respond emotionally, cognitively, and behaviorally to interruptions/barriers in their career plans in community college executive leadership?

4. What lessons do women leaders in community colleges and business say they learn from these interruptions/barriers?

Assumptions

One assumption for this study was that many women in upper-level community college leadership perceived that they had faced barriers to their career plans at some time during their professional careers. Another assumption was that this group of women leaders would be willing to share their experiences in order to foster leadership in others. Yet another assumption was that these women did not psychologically bury their reactions to the barriers to their ambition as an attempt to achieve the perception of strong leadership (Katie Paine as cited in Maxwell, 2000, p. 184). A final assumption was that women in community college executive leadership turned the obstacles to fulfilling their career plans into learning experiences.

Operational Definitions

For Fels (2004), ambition is often born in the childhood dreams of mastering a skill or skills (p. 6), but as individuals mature they realize that ambition is more complicated. This author points out that several steps must occur in the development of one's ambition. First, "[imagine yourself] in a role that requires skill and that exists outside the domestic sphere. Creating an ambition is a fundamental part of forming your identity, and once that is done, you must learn the appropriate skills" (p. 73). Next, "[you] must have the motivation to pursue your ambition over time and in the face of inevitable obstacles" (Fels, 2004, p. 73). Finally, "Such continued efforts require a belief that the goal is worth attaining and that you personally have the qualities required to attain it" (Fels, 2004, p.73). The author notes the need for recognition meshes early with ambition

and its accomplishment. "The recognition of one's skills within a community creates a sense of identity, personal worth, and social inclusion—basic cornerstones in any life" (Fels, 2004, p. 36). In other words, people need to be noticed for their accomplishments.

Recognition, according to Fels (2004), means being valued by others for qualities that they experience and value in ourselves; it involves appreciation by another person that feels accurate and meaningful to the recipient. Because recognition affirms a person's individual experience or accomplishment, it is different from other forms of attention (p. 9). The author states, "Recognition is not synonymous with praise. Unlike recognition, praise is often given for a trait or an accomplishment that we don't care about….Praise, in contrast to recognition, can be experienced as false—in which case it has no impact" (Fels, 2004, p. 10). In other words, people are able to discern feigned emotions. Even on a small scale, the impact of the combination of the wish to master a skill, the expectation that the skill can be mastered, and a source of true recognition can be tremendous.

Fels (2004) feels that when individuals are denied the recognition that they need to continue to pursue an ambition, they feel that their ambition is interrupted. Unintentional career interruptions are part of one's professional life. However, the author notes that women feel the anguish of interruptions to their ambition more that men because of the roles they are expected to play in middle-class white society. As a result, women often have to deal with detours in their career plans (p. 47).

A career detour is often an event or series of events that causes individuals to leave the workforce temporarily or permanently. Hewlett and Luce (2005) list some

examples of events that might pull women from their career paths: marriage, childbearing, health crises, financial problems, divorce, or loss of a loved one (p. 44). Women indicated that in addition to those events that pulled them away from their career, there were some factors that tended to push them into a career detour. Examples included jobs that were not satisfying or meaningful, lack of opportunity, and overly demanding work (Hewlett and Luce, 2005, p. 44). "Of course, in the hurly-burly world of everyday life, most women are dealing with a combination of push and pull factors—and one often serves to intensify the other" (Hewlett and Luce, 2005, p. 44).

One of the push factors in women's lives is the "glass ceiling." The following is a brief description of the term:

> The term "glass ceiling" was coined in a 1986 Wall Street Journal report on corporate women….The glass ceiling is a concept that most frequently refers to barriers faced by women who attempt, or aspire, to attain senior positions (as well as higher salary levels) in corporations, government, education and nonprofit organizations. It can refer to racial and ethnic minorities and men when they experience barriers to advancement. (Society for Human Resource Management, 2004, p. 2)

For the purpose of this research, the glass ceiling is discussed in reference to women in business and higher education. The glass ceiling is partially a result of the way white middle-class Americans define femininity. Women are expected to be caretakers of family and even colleagues first and managers second.

Nunley and Mud (2005) cite a study by the University of Exeter claiming that although women may have broken through the glass ceiling, many find themselves on the "glass cliff." This term refers to potentially risky or precarious positions of leadership

occupied by women. Women on the glass cliff are in danger of being held responsible

for negative outcomes that were set in motion before they took on their current leadership

roles (Nunley and Mudd, 2005, p. 3).

Fels (2004) comments that society has "an ill defined, intuitive sense of what

femininity is….Many of the meanings we attribute to it are not even conscious. By

necessity, however, the definition of femininity is clearly spelled out in psychological

studies of gender" (p. 48). The author notes:

> The frequently used Bem Sex Role Inventory (BSRI) was designed to reveal traits
> of femininity in American society. The following traits were chosen by
> participants in the BSRI to define femininity: *yielding, loyal, cheerful,
> compassionate, shy, sympathetic, affectionate, sensitive to the needs of others,
> flatterable, understanding, eager to soothe hurt feelings, soft-spoken, warm,
> tender, gullible, childlike, does not use harsh language, loves children, gentle*. (p.
> 48)

According to Fels (2004), society's perception of femininity encompassing these

characteristics leads to stereotyping women as less focused on fulfilling their ambition

than men (p. 49).

A stereotype is a group concept held by one social group about another. It is

based on simplification, exaggeration or distortion, generalization, or presentation of

cultural attributes as being normal. Common stereotyping includes a variety of

allegations about groups based around race, ethnicity, sexual orientation, nationality,

religious belief, and sometimes profession and social class (Creating Stereotypes, 2002,

p. 27). There are also positive stereotypes about groups, some of which can work against

women of ambition. The positive traits of being a good listener, a nurturer, and a loving

person cause women to be looked upon as less committed to their careers than men. On the other hand, these same traits are signs that women have learned the importance of being aware of the many nuances of emotional intelligence.

In his book entitled *Multiple Intelligences,* Howard Gardner (1993) describes emotional intelligence as two forms of personal intelligence—interpersonal and intrapersonal. Interpersonal intelligence is "the ability to understand other people: what motivates them, how they work, how to work cooperatively with them (p. 9). Gardner (1993) continues to define interpersonal intelligence as "a correlative ability, turned inward. It is a capacity to form an accurate, veridical model of oneself and to be able to use that model to operate effectively in life" (p. 9). Intrapersonal intelligence is the "knowledge of the internal aspects of a person: access to one's own feeling life, one's range of emotions, the capacity to effect discriminations among these emotions and eventually to label them and to draw upon them as a means of understanding and guiding one's own behavior" (pp. 24-25).

In his book, *Emotional Intelligence*, Daniel Goleman (1995) builds on Gardner's definition of intrapersonal intelligence. He defines emotional intelligence as the emotional skills that include self-awareness; identifying, expressing, and managing feelings; impulse control and delaying gratification; and handling stress and anxiety (p. 259).

In another book, *Working with Emotional Intelligence*, Goleman (1998) says that not only is emotional intelligence important for leaders to possess, but they also need emotional competence. "Our emotional intelligence determines our potential for learning

the practical skills that are based on its five elements: self-awareness, motivation, self-regulation, empathy, and adeptness in relationships" (pp. 24-25). Goleman continues, "Our emotional competence shows how much of that potential we have translated into on-the-job capabilities" (p. 25). Emotional competence determines whether an individual turns his/her career detour into a stepping-stone or a stumbling block to success.

According to Moxley and Pulley (2004), "Resilience consists of a set of individual characteristics that can be developed at any time in a person's life. It is an active process of self-righting and growth that helps people deal with hardships in a way that is conducive to development" (p. 186). They further state, "One of the fundamental characteristics of resilience is that it permits people to weave the difficult experiences of their lives into a larger sense of purpose and meaning" (p. 186). Being able to see things as they really are and deal with them in a constructive way is another trait of resilient people. Still another is "the ability to improvise, to respond creatively in the moment with whatever resources are at hand" (Moxley and Pulley, 2004, p. 186-187).

The women in this study sought recognition for their achievements but were frequently blocked by career detours, by stereotyping, by the need to improve emotional intelligence and endurance, and by an ingrained definition of femininity.

Study of Methodology and Procedures

The descriptions of the patterns and the results of barriers to perceived career plans for women in executive leadership positions in community colleges was the result of a two-phase qualitative-quantitative study employing "strategies of inquiry that

involve collecting data either simultaneously or sequentially to best understand research problems" (Creswell, 2003, p. 18). Phase I consisted of qualitative interviews with purposefully selected informed respondents holding executive leadership positions in community colleges throughout the United States. Phase II consisted of an electronic survey instrument sent to a similar purposefully selected group of respondents.

Phase I: Qualitative Interviews

Phase I interviews were conducted by telephone with 22 women who were either community college presidents or vice presidents. They were chosen from membership lists from the American Association of Community Colleges, the National Alliance for Community and Technical Colleges, the National Council for Instructional Administrators and other professional organizations. Each respondent was asked the same series of nine questions (see appendix A). The interviewer recorded the responses during the telephone conversations.

The purpose of the interviews was to determine if women leaders at community colleges felt they had to deal with intervening factors that diverted, reshaped, or undermined their career plans to achieve their current positions.

The interviewees' responses were coded according to common themes and put into lists. The first list dealt with general themes involved in perceived interruptions to career plans, and the second list dealt with lessons learned from such experiences that tended to change, reshape or hinder career plans for women in executive leadership

positions in community colleges. These general themes provided the foundation for the

survey questions that were subsequently developed for Phase II.

Phase II: Quantitative Data--Survey Instrument

A 31-item survey was used to examine barriers to perceived career plans for

women in executive leadership positions in community colleges. Informed respondent

interviews in Phase I helped guide the development of the survey questions in Phase II

(see Appendices B and C).

An informed respondent list of 248 community college vice presidents and

presidents was compiled using the membership lists used in Phase I. In addition,

community college World Wide Web sites, readily available through the Internet, were

used to identify women in executive leadership positions.

The survey questions focused on career aspirations of respondents as young

children, respondents' desires for recognition, resources for recognition as adults,

perceived barriers to career goals as adults, reactions to perceived career barriers, and

lessons learned from experiencing one or more career detours.

The purpose of this survey was to provide quantitative data to help identify

perceived barriers to career aspirations for women leaders in community colleges across

the United States. In addition, it was used to identify typically unconventional ways that

women sought recognition for their achievements as adults. Also, this survey sought to

find out how women in executive leadership positions in community colleges handled

career detours and the lessons they learned from these experiences. Finally, the survey

collected demographic information on each respondent in order to see if there were any trends in perception of barriers to career success tied to respondents' age or years of experience as community college leaders.

The surveys were sent to the informed respondents electronically as a Web link in the body of an e-mail that introduced the purpose for the survey and invited recipients to participate. At the end of two weeks, a reminder was sent to all recipients, with the goal of prompting those who had not yet completed the survey to do so. A second reminder was sent tow weeks after the first. Finally, at the end of two more weeks, hard copies of the survey were sent via mail to 50 randomly selected women on the respondent list. At the end of another two weeks, the survey was closed.

Inferential statistics were used to compare the differences between the variables. Basically, chi-square was used to see if the data fit an assumed frequency model. "The chi-square test measures the degree of disagreement between the data and the null hypothesis (McClave and Sincich, 1997, p. 372). "The calculation looks at each cell and measures the difference between the actual frequency you got and the frequency that you would have expected by chance" (Nardi, 2003, p. 144). "Chi-square tells us whether two variables are associated" (Nardi, 2003, p. 152).

This test was used on responses to pairs of questions, and the goal was to determine if the distribution of these paired responses could be explained by chance alone. In this study, all chi-square tests were carried out with one degree of freedom and a significance level of 0.10 (90 percent confidence). Ultimately, the results of the tests

were compared to the trends developed from the Phase I to see if statistical evidence backed up the responses of the participants in the interview.

For all such tests the following general hypotheses were used:

- Null: The pattern of answers to the two questions under consideration could be explained through a bivariate binominal distribution, using probabilities based on the fraction of "yes" answers to each question.

- Alternative: The pattern of answers showed some degree of dependence that could not be explained by the above distribution. Whether this dependence was positive (both "no" or both "yes") or negative (one "no" and one "yes") would be determined through inspection of the data.

To investigate the effect of age and experience on women's perceptions regarding career detours, the response data were analyzed using a series of t-tests on the proportion of "yes" answers. Responses were broken up into three levels for each category (age and experience), and independent-sampling test procedures were used on each pair of sample proportions. This method was used instead of an analysis of variance because the sizes of the samples were markedly different from each other. In addition, a chi-square test was not used because some of the sample sizes were small enough to make the results unreliable.

The following general hypotheses were used for the t-tests, considering two age/experience groups at a time:

- Null: The proportions of "yes" answers did not differ significantly between groups.

• Alternative: The proportions of "yes" answers did differ significantly.

The null hypothesis in each case was that the two proportions being compared were equal; the alternative hypothesis was that they were different, meaning that the two groups held different attitudes concerning the question of interest. This particular approach required the use of a two-tailed t-test.

A significance level of 0.10 was used for all tests, and the degrees of freedom depended on the number of data points in each sample. This level was chosen instead of the customary 0.05 due to limitations imposed by small sample sizes. A preliminary estimate of 95 percent confidence intervals for proportions of "yes" responses yielded a number of cases in which the interval boundaries fell above 1 or below 0 (both physically impossible). Therefore, the simplest remedy was to narrow the confidence limits.

For the above analysis, the age data were broken into three groups as follows: 30-39 and 40-49 together, 50-59, and 60-69. This was done because only one respondent fell into the 30-39 age group. The three levels of experience specified in survey Question 6 (0-5 years, 6-10 years, 11+ years) were used as given, since the numbers of respondents in those three groups were not as unequal as in the age calculations.

Accuracy of Findings: Validity

Nardi (2003) states, "Validity is about accuracy and whether the operationalization is correctly indicating what it's supposed to….There are several ways of determining if the measures you use are valid" (p. 49). Mertens (1998) recommends triangulation as a means to check information collected from different sources for

consistency of evidence across sources of data. "For example, multiple methods such as interviews, observation, and document review can be used" (p. 183). In summary, Creswell (2003) reminds the researcher of the importance of "the need to convey the steps they will take in their studies to check for accuracy and credibility of their findings" (p. 195).

Construct Validity

According to Nardi (2003), "A construct is an abstract, complex characteristic or idea that typically has numerous ways to measure it" (p. 50). In this study, the perception of barriers to career goals' accomplishment, ways to deal with the barriers, and learning experiences are the complex ideas being measured. Nardi (2003) goes on to say, "Construct validity is based on actual results; sometimes it is not achieved until after the data have been collected and statistically analyzed. Then this information is valuable for the next time someone proposes research on this topic and is operationalizing similar variables" (p. 50). To insure accuracy in the construct validity, multiple sources were cross-referenced. These sources included related literature, interview responses, and survey data.

Internal Validity

The researcher looked for casual links and/or explored plausible or rival explanations and attempted to carry out pattern-matching and explanation-building to

enhance internal validity by maintaining a rich description of interview content, processes and patterns of behavior.

External Validity

In this study, the generalization of the research was strengthened through the use of the survey instrument. A two-phase method of collecting data worked to ensure a substantial return rate from selected women in executive leadership positions at community colleges. Generalizations from interviews were crosschecked with the frequency of responses emerging from the survey data in Phase II.

Triangulation was used to crosscheck the interview data with survey data and with current literature (see Table 1.1). According to Mertens (1998), "Triangulation involves checking information that has been collected from different sources or methods for consistency of evidence across sources of data" (p. 183). Nardi (2003) continues, "Most methods can be combined to study a topic (often termed *triangulation* when two or more measures or methods are used), and several of them share similar procedures, sampling strategies, and ethical considerations (p. 14). Creswell (2003) notes that triangulation is the most frequently used strategy and the easiest to implement when the researcher is checking for accuracy of findings (p. 196). The issue of bias was minimized by piloting the survey instrument with 20 women in leadership positions at Central Piedmont Community College in Charlotte, North Carolina.

Table 1.1

Crosswalk Strategy: Triangulation of Research Questions and Research Methods

Research Question	Interview	Related Literature	Survey
Question 1: What factors cause women in community college leadership positions to detour form their original career plans?	Question 1	yes	Question 10 Question 11 Question 12
Question 2A: What do women in community college executive leadership perceive an intervening factors diverting, reshaping, or undermining their career plans in community college leadership?	Question 4 Question 9	yes	Question 19 Question 26 Question 28 Question 29 Question 30
Question 2B: What are the similarities and dissimilarities with women in executive leadership positions in the corporate sector?		yes	Question 20 Question 21 Question 22 Question 23 Question 24 Question 27
Question 3: How do women leaders in community colleges respond emotionally, cognitively, and behaviorally to interruptions/barriers in their career plans?	Question 2 Question 6 Question 7	yes	Question 13 Question 14 Question 15 Question 27 Question 31
Question 4: What lessons do women leaders in community college and business say they learn from these interruptions/barriers?	Question 3 Question 5 Question 8	yes	Question 16 Question 17 Question 18

Accuracy of Findings: Reliability

This research followed the design suggested by Creswell (2003). "In a sequential approach, obtain themes and specific statements from participants….In the next phase, use these statements as specific items and the themes for scales to create a survey instrument that is grounded in the views of the participants" (p. 221). Replication of this research should be possible using similar procedures and purposeful samples.

Historical Review of Related Literature

Abraham Maslow, author of *Motivation and Personality* (1987) and one of the founders of humanistic psychology, developed a theory of motivation called the Basic Need Hierarchy, in which he ranked physiological needs as the basic drives that motivate humans. He believes that after physiological needs are satisfied, still other needs emerge, including the self-actualization need. Maslow makes the following comment:

> It [self-actualization] refers to people's desire for self-fulfillment, namely the tendency for them to become…everything that one is capable of becoming….The specific form that these needs will take of course vary greatly from person to person. In one individual they may take the form of the desire to be an excellent parent, in another they may be expressed athletically, and in still another they may be expressed in painting pictures or in inventing things. (p. 22)

The need for self-actualization might be termed "ambition." Thus, Maslow believes that all individuals have the desire to develop their skills to the greatest potential.

Anna Fels (2004) concluded that as children, both boys and girls have ambitions involve "two undisguised elements…joined together. One is a special skill [and] a large

helping of attention in the form of an appreciative audience" (p. 6). She goes on to say that over time women tend to change their early childhood dreams for recognition and defer to men who openly seek and enjoy recognition for their accomplishments (p. 207).

Douvan and Adelson (1966) saw the deference of women's ambitions as early as adolescence. They conducted two national interview studies through the Survey Research Center at the University of Michigan in 1955 and 1956 first on middle-class adolescent boys and then on middle-class adolescent girls (p. viii). Sponsored by the Boy Scouts and Girl Scouts of America, the research team interviewed 1045 boys, aged 14-16 and 2005 girls in grades 6-12 about the adolescent experience, including visions of their future achievements (p. ix). The study found that both "middle-class boys and girls plan to go to college and to train for professional jobs" (p. 321). Not surprisingly, "Middle-class boys see their future jobs as sources both of intrinsic satisfaction and of achievement opportunities...Middle-class boys state the interest of the work and the rewards of leadership and recognition to be central criteria for choosing jobs" (p. 322). On the other hand, "Middle-class girls did not distinguish themselves by a preoccupation with individual achievement….They want 'interesting' jobs…nice coworkers and to be able to work with people or help others (pp. 322-323). The researchers found, "Fame, leadership, high pay, and status were among the characteristics they consider least important in choosing a job" (p. 323).

Douvan and Adelson (1996) make the following comments on the role of ambition in adolescent girls' lives:

On the one hand, there is the general prescription that no matter what talents the girl may possess, she should in all cases of serious conflict prefer the feminine goals of marriage and childcare to individual goals outside these areas. On the other hand, if she makes a clear choice in either direction, the girl in our culture is likely to feel somewhat uneasy. If she remains single and devotes herself to a profession, she feels that she has failed as a woman since our culture recognizes only one path to feminine fulfillment. (p. 34)

Ninety-five percent of the adolescent girls interviewed chose occupations that demanded modest commitment and which required few skills, or they chose jobs that implied no career commitment at all. These girls seemed to be dominated by the theme of fulfillment of the feminine role, leaving only five percent of the girls choosing careers that required "strong commitment" (Douvan and Adelson, 1996. p. 39).

Fels (2004) makes the following comments about the findings of the landmark Douvan and Adelson study:

Seen from a different angle, however, the fact that 5 percent of the girls interviewed by Douvan and Adelson in the 1960s entertained realizable professional ambitions was a huge step forward. Throughout the first two-thirds of the twentieth century a small but growing number of women did in fact actively pursue cultural, professional, and political careers. Yet despite their daring and innovative historical roles, the paradigm of the selfless narrative persisted. (p. 24)

Darley (1979) studied the differential career achievements in women and men. She notes, "The particular nature of a given social situation, including the expectations of real or imagined other people, can shape the kind of behavior that will be displayed" (p. 377). This presents problems for ambitious women. Prior to the Industrial Revolution, women's roles were fairly well defined—housewife and mother. However, with the advent of good childcare facilities and other organized programs for children, 21st

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century women have the opportunity to pursue career goals. The freedom can cause a

conflict for women. Darley notes, "People are likely to infer, for example, that a

successful career woman has an aggressive, competitive nature, rather than she is simply

capable of behaving in an aggressive, competitive way where her immediate role requires

such behavior" (p. 381).   The author concludes, "If it is correct that…a woman who is a

success in her occupation is assumed to be necessarily lacking as a mother, then it is clear

that working women are in an unresolvable conflict" (p. 383).

Using Douvan and Adelson's study and professional experience, Fels (2004)

contends that women postpone the satisfaction of personal ambition in order to fulfill

middle-class society's idea of femininity. Thus, the qualities that make women good

listeners and nurturers often interrupt their ambition. The work presented here studied

how women in executive leadership positions in community colleges handled the issue of

interrupted career paths frequently associated with maintaining femininity contrasted to

their counterparts in the corporate sector.

Limitations of Study

One limitation of this two-pronged study was researcher bias during the interview

stage. Mertens (1998) notes, "On the basis of the viewpoints expressed by participants in

the research, researchers accept the responsibility to interpret the data and use it as a basis

for theory generation" (p. 171). The researcher must refrain from manipulating data to

support an emerging theory. Shipper and Dillard (2000) warn, "The questioners…face

encoding and decoding problems in interview studies that leave room for interpretation and error" (p. 332).

Since a telephone interview was selected as a data collection method, the interviewees did not provide a totally unstructured interview such as might be found in the ethnographic sense (Mertens, 1998, p. 170-171 and 323). Time was a limitation in the qualitative phase of this study due to the busy schedules of the women community college presidents and vice presidents who were interviewed.

CHAPTER II

REVIEW OF LITERATURE

Women in executive leadership positions in education and in the corporate sector often face career detours. They have to postpone personal deadlines for reaching their career goals, or they feel the necessity to change those career goals. This research studied perceived barriers to intended career paths for women in executive leadership in the community college setting and women's reactions to them. The problem for this study was to describe the patterns and the results of barriers to intended career paths for their numbers in the corporate sector as well.

In a study of 61 high-achieving women who were mid- and senior-level managers, Ruderman and Ohlott (2002) wanted to "understand where these women traveled, why they traveled there, how they traveled, and the hazards they encountered along the way" (p.5). Using in-depth interviews and subsequent analysis, the researchers developed a list of underlying forces guiding personal choices and trade-offs in the lives of managerial women (p.5). Isolation, balancing family and career, dealing with stereotypical labels, and learning to work within the "good ol' boys" network are examples of some of the forces that affect the career of women in the corporate sector and, in turn, affect the amount or recognition they receive.

In 1999, Barbara Tedrow and Robert Rhoads did an in-depth study of 30 senior women administrators in community colleges in the Midwest. Their research focused on how these women viewed themselves in their leadership roles within the community college: the challenges they faced, their perceptions of gender issues within their organizations, and how they managed the intersection between their professional and personal lives (p. 4). They came to the following conclusion:

> Each senior woman administrator who adapted or conformed to traditional standards held important positions at her college. Each found herself, however, in a double bind: By breaking with relational norms expected of women, the women who adapted were isolated from other women. Paradoxically, although they conformed to male norms of leadership, they nonetheless were never fully accepted by the men simply because they were women. (p. 8)

The opportunities for women to achieve their career goals and the accompanying recognition have increased dramatically over the last century. Anna Fels (2004), a practicing psychiatrist and faculty member of the Weill Medical College of Cornell University at New York Presbyterian Hospital, emphasizes, "Women gained access to a whole new, vital aspect of life. They could freely pursue ambitions and were no longer automatically relegated to the role of love object or caretaker" (p. 252). However, she adds, "Many factors intervene to divert, reshape, or undermine women's ambitions as they proceed through their adult lives" (Fels, p. 29). Chief among the factors that affect women's ambition in some fashion is the career detour. For various reasons, women are either pushed or pulled into detours form their career paths.

Hewlett and Luce (2005) ask some interesting questions. "Across professions and across sectors, what is the scope of this opt-out [detour] phenomenon? What proportion

of professional women take off-ramps/detours rather than continue on their chosen career paths?" (p. 44). For many highly successful women, deciding to take a career detour is difficult. Fels (2004) points out, "We all, men and women, spend our lives seeking out and mastering skills for the sheer delight and sense of competence they provide us…" (p. 36). And, "These women have invested heavily in their education and training. They have spent years accumulating the skills and credentials necessary for successful careers. Most are not eager to toss that painstaking effort aside" (Hewlett and Luce, 2005, p. 45). However, as Fels (2004) reminds the reader, "Many factors intervene to divert, reshape, or undermine women's ambitions as they proceed through their adult lives" (p. 29).

Hewlett and Luce (2005) reported on a 2004 survey sponsored by The Center for Work-Life Policy, a New York-based not-for-profit organization designed to gather data on highly successful women and their career detours. "The survey, conducted by Harris Interactive, comprised a nationally representative group of highly qualified women, defined as those with a graduate degree, a professional degree, or a high-honors undergraduate degree. The sample size was 2,443 women" (p. 44).

In an article for the *Harvard Business Review*, Hewlett and Luce (2005) describe the results of The Center for Work-Life Policy survey. "Many women take an off-ramp at some point on their career highway. Nearly four in ten highly qualified women (37%) report that they left work voluntarily at some point in their careers. Among women who have children, that statistic rises to 43%" (p. 44). The authors listed other factors that pull women away from their jobs including caring for elderly parents or other family members, reported by 24 percent of the women surveyed, and personal health issues,

reported by 9 percent of the survey respondents (p. 44). These instances are examples of

highly qualified women being pulled off the career highway.

Fels (2004) contends that the family issues that force women to postpone or even

change their professional goals can be described as the social pressure to be feminine.

She summarizes:

> Although women are no longer denied access to training in most types of careers,
> they have come up against what seems to be an even more powerful barrier to
> their ambitions. In both the public and private spheres, white, middle-class
> women are facing the reality that in order to be seen as feminine, they must
> provide or relinquish resources—including recognition—to others. It is difficult
> for women to confront and address the unspoken mandate that they subordinate
> needs for recognition to those of others….The expectation is so deeply rooted in
> the culture's ideals of femininity that it is largely unconscious. (pp. 28-29)

Pascall, Parker, and Evetts (2000) support this assumption. "Family structures

also impinge on career choice. The domestic division of labour still gives women prime

responsibility for child care and makes single-minded commitment to career expensive

for women and those who depend on them" (p. 63).

For instance, a recent article in the *Charlotte Observer* quoted Nancy Pelosi,

newly elected Speaker of the United States House of Representatives, who said, "This

Congress is going to be about children" (Ohlemacher, 2007, A13-15). The article focuses

on the number of women in Congress, their age, their qualifications, and their confidence

that they could represent their constituents well. The article continues:

> Once women decide to run for office, they are just as successful as
> men….However, women are much less likely to run. Childcare is the big reason.
> Women are much more likely than men to be responsible for childcare, and that
> doesn't always fit into the usually chaotic schedule of a member of

Congress….Pelosi, 66….waited until her youngest daughter was in high school before she ran for Congress, a path followed by many women. (Ohlemacher, 2007, A13-15)

Childcare issues continue to affect women's pursuit of success, not only in corporate America and in higher education but also in politics.

Hewlett and Luce (2005) point to a disturbing trend: "Large numbers of highly qualified women [are] dropping out of mainstream careers" (p. 43). These authors give the following examples of highly qualified women who left their dynamic careers:

Brenda Barnes, the former CEO of PepsiCo, gave up her megawatt career to spend more time with her three children; Karen Hughes resigned from her enormously influential job in the Bush White House to go home to Texas to better look after a needy teenage son….Lisa Beattie Frelinghuysen…featured in a recent *60 Minutes* segment, was building a very successful career as a lawyer. She'd been president of the law review at Stanford and went to work for a prestigious law firm. She quit after she had her first baby three years later. (Hewlett and Luce, 2005, p. 43)

The difficulty of integrating career and family is not unique to the United States. "According to a survey of women managers in the United Kingdom by the Chartered Institute of Personnel and Development in 2002, 27 percent of female managers point to family commitments as a career blocker" (Ruderman, 2004, p. 280-281).

Elder care sometimes causes a career detour for women in the corporate sector. Although not the primary caregivers, many women have to figure out how to provide the day-to-day care needed by older family members. They have the responsibility of nurturing and nursing their parents (Ruderman and Ohlott, 2002, p. 181). This is an extra

emotional challenge when a woman is an only child with no siblings on whom to depend for help in caring for elderly parents.

Certainly, personal health issues can cause detours in the path toward career goals for successful women. Koss-Feder (2003) quotes Jean M. Otte, the founder and president of Women Unlimited in Manhattan, a company that provides leadership development programs for women. "These professional women are not going to be effective leaders if they keep running like hamsters on a wheel; they're either going to the kids' soccer matches, sending their bosses e-mails at midnight or thinking about doing one or the other" (p. 3.10). In a survey of 561 women conducted by World WIT, the world's largest off and online networking group for women in business, and GLS Consulting of Brookline, Massachusetts, "Forty-four percent of professional women surveyed recently said they have felt more stress at home and on the job since 9/11, and about 60 percent said they have little emotional strength left for life outside the office" (Koss-Feder, 2003, p. 3.10).

Carol Gallagher (2000), author of *Going to the Top: A Road Map for Success from America's Leading Women Executives*, points out, "Life-threatening illnesses, family tragedies, and deaths, divorce or other personal traumas" (p. 221) are events that cause women to be pulled form their career paths. She tells the story of Linda LoRe, who was in senior management at a major southern California department store when she was diagnosed with malignant melanoma at age 32. Her doctors told her that if they failed to remove the entire cancer or if it had advanced too far, she would die. LoRe decided that she needed to make changes in her hectic life, so she quit her job and took one closer to

her home. She made a full recovery, but not without making some decisions that took her off her original career track. She says, "The illness started me on a completely new path" (pp. 222-223).

In contrast, sometimes, women are pushed off their career paths by work-related experiences such as jobs that are not satisfying or meaningful, lost promotions, or lack of education. In 2003, Betsy Bernard quit as president of AT&T after the company decided not to split off its $11 billion consumer unit with Bernard in charge. Her experience was summarized in an article in *Fortune* (2003):

> Bernard told *Fortune* on the day AT&T announced her exit, "I came here to run a standalone traded company, which we decided not to take out public." The news was surprising since Bernard is considered one of telecom's toughest and best executives, and a loyal protégée of AT&T CEO Dave Dorman….Though the AT&T presidency, with oversight of the $26.6 billion business unit, looked like a great promotion, it was consolation after the company shelved plans to split off its $11 billion consumer unit, with Bernard in charge. Seeing scant runway at AT&T, Bernard decided to leave. (Sellers, 2003, p. 50)

Women in the corporate sector perceive gender stereotyping as a barrier to fulfilling ambition. They feel they must face situations in which decisions are made based on perceived stereotypical female behaviors (Googins, 2001, p.1). For instance, "Motherhood is often seen as all-consuming, which has given rise to the perception that women cannot be good workers and good mothers" (Williams, 2003, p. 1).

Yet another example of stereotyping is the "glass cliff." Not only do high-performing women in corporate American face workforce reductions, reassignment to lateral responsibilities, and lost promotions as barriers to their career goals, in many cases they face the "glass cliff" rather than the "glass ceiling." An article in *HR Magazine*

(2004) states, "The glass ceiling is a concept that most frequently refers to barriers faced by women who attempt, or aspire, to attain senior positions [as well as higher salary levels] in corporations, government, education, and nonprofit organizations" ("Glass Ceiling," 2004, p. 2). A recent study by Exeter University suggests, "Female executives are more likely than their male counterparts to find themselves in precarious jobs with high risk of failure. The study argued that women who break through the glass ceiling into senior management often find themselves on the edge of a glass cliff" (Connolly, 2004, p. 17). The study found that in a time of crisis or business downturn, bosses turned to women, "believing that the perceived feminine traits of sympathy, understanding and intuition will help turn around an unsuccessful company" (Kelly, 2005, p. 33).

Examples of women who fell from the glass cliff include "Ann Iverson, who was given the job in 1996 of turning around Laura Ashley, which had 60 million pounds in losses. Her U.S. expansion plans were a disaster and she resigned two years later" (Kelly, 2005, p. 33). Another example of a woman who fell off the glass cliff is Michele Jobling. She "paid the price for failing to stem the decline in children's wear sales for Marks and Spencer. She was ousted in October 2002 after less than two years" (Kelly, 2005, p. 33).

Another push factor for women in the corporate sector is a lack of well-defined support systems—mentors and networks. According to Ruderman and Ohlott (2002), "In traditional Western society, a woman defines her identity through attachment and intimacy, organizing and developing her sense of self in the context of her important relationships" (p. 39). *HR Magazine* (2004) mentions the lack of mentoring for women:

Opportunities for promotion often favor men due to the developmental prospects, such as mentoring and networks. Women may not have full access to informal networks men use to develop work relationships in the company, and these networks often tend to exclude women due to the nature of their activities or the perception that these are "male activities" [e.g., golf]. (p. 3)

Kennedy (1998) quotes Dr. Barbara Moss, author and career development expert, who follows up, "There are …subtle factors at play, such as the availability of mentors. Recent research at one large firm into why more women weren't occupying its senior positions found that a major roadblock was that women did not have mentors the way the high-potential men did" (p. 4).

It is not unusual for women leaders to feel like they have no place where they belong. They struggle with a lack of mentoring as well as with the fact that they have to be careful about what they say and to whom. Ruderman and Ohlott (2002) comment, "These limitations may be greater for women than for men at a given level, as women are often stereotyped as more vulnerable, than men to begin with. In addition, there may be few if any female peers to get feedback from, socialize with, or learn from" (pp. 41-42).

What are the emotional, cognitive, and behavioral responses to career detours and barriers to success for women in corporate America? From the survey designed to study the role of off-ramps and on-ramps for highly qualified women conducted by Harris Interactive in 2004, Hewlett and Luce (2005) point out, "Among women who take off-ramps [actually leave their positions for a time], the overwhelming majority have every intention of returning to the workforce" (p. 45). Ninety-three percent of the women who were off-ramped at the time of the survey wanted to return to their careers (p. 45).

Hewlett and Luce (2005) note, Typically, high-achieving women who take a career

detour are out of the workforce for 2.2 years. In the corporate sector, that time is reduced

to 1.2 years. "However, even these relatively short career interruptions entail heavy

financial penalties. Our data show that women lose an average of 18% of their earning

power when they take an off-ramp" (p. 45).

When women in the corporate sector are pushed into a career detour, it is often

difficult to resume the path to their career goals with their earlier enthusiasm. To

illustrate a corporate-related setback and its consequences, Beverly Kempton (1992) tells

the story of Rosemary Caserta Uhle, vice president of money market and foreign

exchange for Hessische Landesbank-Girozentrale:

> After working for the bank for eight years, Uhle was suddenly dismissed the day
> after she returned from a vacation. She was told that the bank was going to
> redirect its services, and her letter of resignation would be accepted immediately.
> After helping the bank develop $2 billion in new business Uhle was in shock
> when her loyalty was not rewarded. She says, "For the first several days I was in
> a state of shock. I couldn't even put what I felt into words…I had a sense of
> personal failure. Why was I dispensable and someone else not?" Uhle went on to
> experience frustration and stress after the shock of her termination wore off. After
> a year of job-hunting with the help of a prominent nationwide outplacement firm,
> she finally landed a position with Sheshunoff Information Services of Austin,
> Texas. Uhle was hired to inaugurate Sheshunoff's New York office and serve as
> director of eastern regional sales. Although she was excited at the prospect, it was
> a changed Rosemary Uhle who reported to work. Uhle lives with a measure of
> fear now. "My outlook and even my personality are different in some ways,' says
> Uhle, who talks about her former self with nostalgia. 'I'm not carefree and easy,
> as I used to be." (p. 46)

Many women in the corporate sector face career detours that do not include

actually taking time off from their work. These detours may not result in a loss of money,

recognition, or sense of self-worth, but they may delay reaching one's career goals in

some way. Hewlett and Luce (2005) report the following statistic:

> A majority [58%] of highly qualified women describe their careers as
> "nonlinear"—which is to say, they do not follow the conventional trajectory long
> established by successful men….In contrast, these women report that their career
> paths have not followed a progression through the hierarchy of an industry. (pp.
> 46-48)

Fels' study (2004) cites several extremely successful women—Eleanor Roosevelt,

Golda Meir, Mary McCarthy, and Katharine Graham—who felt that they started out as

young innocents and were propelled by circumstances to arrive at their surprisingly

successful states (p. 25).

The sometimes fuzzy roadmap to women's career goals provides an explanation

for their loss of recognition. In some cases, it is difficult to maintain the momentum to

claim deserved plaudits. Fels (2004) claims that the refusal to seek or to claim

recognition is a by-product of society's pull on women to fulfill traditional feminine

roles. As a result, women deflect recognition and admiration away from themselves and

toward men. A study of 2,900 employees in five industries by Chicago-based global

employee and consulting firm ISR determined, "One of the reasons women generally

aren't occupying the top executive suites of corporations is that they tend not to embrace

the art of self-promotion. Men, however, do quite well at pumping themselves up as

assets to a corporation" (McAleavy, 2005, p. 3D).

Fels (2004) points out that women do not tend to draw attention to themselves:

We all, men and women, spend our lives seeking out and mastering skills for the sheer delight and sense of competence they provide us…there is a satisfaction inherent in putting our learning and talents to use. But far from celebrating their achievements in newly available professions, women fearfully seek to deflect attention from themselves. They refuse to claim a central, purposeful place in their own stories. (p. 35)

It is no wonder that many highly qualified women have trouble sustaining their ambition because of the career detours/barriers/off-ramps that they face in the course of their professional lives. Fels (2004) states that ambition needs to be nourished by mastery and recognition when she says, "Mastery and recognition here, as in virtually all cases, are the twin emotional engines of ambition" (p.14). Hewlett and Luce (2005) point out, "Given the tour of women's careers we've just taken, is it any surprise that women find it difficult to claim or sustain ambition? The [Harris Interactive] survey shows that while almost half of the men consider themselves extremely or very ambitious, only about a third of the women do" (p. 48).

Fels (2004) believes that women lose the opportunity for acknowledgment because society still operates under a pervasive and ingrained gendered recognition system (p.104). Segal's article in *HR Magazine* (2005) states, "We [women] have come a long way toward achieving gender equality in society and in the workplace. But we still have a long way to go, particularly when it comes to finding women at the highest levels of management" (p. 45). Segal continues, "Women account for 45 percent of the workforce, for example, yet women represent fewer than 15 percent of Fortune 500 Officers" (p. 121). Thus another roadblock to women's ambition is the fact that often their ambitions are "…hampered by well-ingrained corporate cultures. For example,

corporate policies and practices can subtly maintain the status quo by keeping men in

positions of corporate power" (Society for Human Resource Management, 2004, p. 2).

"Boards of directors, which are mostly composed of men, sometimes perpetuate the

status quo by selecting CEOs who look like them" (Society for Human Resource

Management, 2004, p. 2).

Gallagher (2000) gives an example of how organizational politics can be misread

by rising women leaders when she makes the following remarks:

> The skills you may need to get into the executive level (and I'd be the first to
> admit you may have to be relatively aggressive) may not serve you well once you
> get there. After you become a member of the "team," you need to be a team
> player, and that requires a different set of behaviors. Indeed, managers—
> especially women, unfortunately—often antagonize others if they are perceived as
> overly ambitious or a threat. (p. 105)

Hewlett and Luce (2005) summarize the situation, "A vicious cycle emerges: As

women's ambitions stall, they are perceived as less committed, they no longer get the

best assignments, and this lowers their ambitions further" (p. 28). For example, Rosabeth

Moss Kanter (2005), a former editor of the *Harvard Business Review* and author of

numerous books on management, notes, "Every single prominent woman I know has

been in a situation where she's in a meeting with lots of men but not too many women.

She makes a pivotal comment [and it is ignored]." Kanter continues, "If you think you're

going to be criticized and attacked…you hold back, you don't try" (McGinn, 2005, p.

67). Or, as Greenberg (1992)) describes Bernadine Healy, former director of the National

Institute of Health (NIH), "Healy, however, tends to be impatient, confident of her own

judgment…." (p. 354). She her confidence suffered a blow because she was "indifferent

to the old-boy loyalties that produced long tenures in the upper ranks of NIH

management" and resigned her post in1992 (Greenberg, 1992, p. 254). In most cases,

when successful women lose confidence, they lose the opportunity for recognition.

Kanter continues to comment on women's decisions to interrupt their careers and

how that action affects their confidence in the following comment:

> Women who leave the work force for a time do sometimes begin to doubt
> themselves in terms of their professional skills and ability….It begins to feel more
> and more overwhelming to step back in, because you'll have to learn a lot of
> things again and convince people of your skills. (McGinn, 2005, p. 67)

What resources do women in the corporate sector use to replace lack of

recognition and loss of attitude after being pulled or pushed off the career highway? Fels

(2004) suggests, "If women are to thrive, we must identify, critically assess, and

purposefully develop situations that can provide sustaining affirmation—spheres of

recognition. If we have no opportunities for appropriate support, we have to acknowledge

this and find other venues" (p. 97).

Diane Domeyer (2001), *OfficePRO* columnist, tells individuals who face career

barriers or detours to reach out. She advises them to rely on the people in their support

system, including family, friends, and mentors. A good support system provides

guidance, perspective, and emotional support (p. 27).

Often a woman's family helps her avoid a feeling of isolation and provides

tremendous support for her ambitions a she works through one or more career barriers.

Gallagher (2000) states, "Some executive women want someone they can confide

in….Some appreciate that their partners are in business and can relate to the issues

they're coping with" (p. 89). She continues, "If you and your partner share similar careers, you may have an easier time communicating about both of your work experiences" (p. 90).

Many women executives whose spouses/partners are not in the corporate sector may "find it easier to confide in a friend who is intimately familiar with the challenges and demands of the business world" (Gallagher, 2000, p. 90). The author tells the following story:

> Nancy Hobbs, Executive Vice President at AirTouch Cellular, and Sue Swenson, President of Leap Wireless International, have husbands who are not in the business world. Since Nancy and Sue have similar career backgrounds, they have found it quite beneficial to share their frustrations and successes with each other. (Gallagher, 2000, p. 90)

Frequently, mentors play a vital part in keeping women's ambitions alive even though they might be getting ready for a career detour or just re-entering their career path. According to Fels (2004), "Mentors, individuals in comparatively high-level positions who take a particular interest in someone more junior, often become crucial" (p. 122). Gallagher (2000) calls the individuals who support women and their ambition "influencers, advisers, supporters, sponsors, and advocates" (p. 164).

Men and women who fail to receive recognition in their jobs often find substitutes for it. Frequently, they seize the opportunity to volunteer in their communities. Champy and Nohria, authors of *The Arc of Ambition: Defining the Leadership Journey* (2000) make the following observation about the reason for volunteering within one's community:

Many people find purpose both within and outside their work. And for some people, when work becomes problematic or loses its sense of purpose, they put intensity into other causes. We have a friend who was working seventy hours a week at what was then Digital Equipment Corporation (DEC). The company was experiencing extreme business difficulties, putting tremendous pressure upon her and others at work. Yet, she found great meaning by volunteering an extra five hours at a nearby soup kitchen. (p. 126)

Simone Schloss, a financial analyst and a graduate of Princeton and the Wharton School of Business, did not find her work as fulfilling as she originally had hoped. As a result, she was easily pulled off her career track when she took time off from her career to raise her three daughters. She could have returned to her job, but she did not absolutely need to work because her husband earned a living that could support the family. She wanted to reinvent herself, so her daughters could see her master something besides mothering. Schloss "…rediscovered an ardor for music that had its beginnings 40 years ago when her mother…took her to musicals like 'Mame' and 'Sweet Charity'" (Berger, 2006, p. 14WC). Lessons in voice and sight-reading led Schloss to join a local singing group that performed at parties, and she worked on her phrasing and presentation at the Helen Baldassare Cabaret Performance Workshop in Greenwich Village. On some evenings, she turns into Simone Schloss, cabaret singer in a sequined white gown, singing standards at a local nightspot. Her wish for her children to see their mother as more than a homemaker came true when her oldest daughter agreed to join her mother for one number at the local club (Berger, 2006, p. 14WC). Thus, Schloss found a way to achieve recognition other than through her former career as a financial analyst.

Age provides another coping mechanism for women affected by career detours and roadblocks. Taylor (2001) points out, "Only in adulthood are meaning structures

clearly formed and developed and the revision of established meaning perspective takes place" (p. 288). Clearly, the definition of career barriers/detours does not change, but women's attitudes toward the emotional and economic results of these events become less dramatic as they age.

According to Gail Sheehy (1995), author of *New Passages*, who conducted hundreds of interviews with both men and women across the country, older women with a good deal of leadership experience in both corporate and educational settings view themselves as being in a unique position. She makes the following statements:

> It's as though when we are young, we have seen only the first act of the play. By our forties we have reached the climactic second-act curtain. Only as we approach fifty does the shape and meaning of the whole play become clear. We move into the third act with the intention of a resolution and tremendous curiosity about how it will all come out" (p. 150). She continues, "By the time they reach their fifties, most educated women have acquired the skills and self-knowledge to master complex environments and change the conditions around them." (p. 151)

Gersick and Kram (2002) conducted a study of high-achieving women in senior management positions who represent the first generation of women to launch professional careers. One of their subjects made the following statement:

> Years ago, it was always, "I'm gonna show him that I can do this!' and 'I've got to make it to this level by the time I'm this age."…[I was] on the treadmill looking at the speedometer saying, "If I don't get up to 120 miles per hour I'm going to fail!"…Not any more….I don't feel I have anything to prove anymore….And I think it's just a matter of maturity, I guess. (p. 119)

Maturity appears to be one factor that helps women leaders in the corporate sector cope with career barriers/detours.

Tedrow and Rhoads (1999) found that little research had been done on the factors that shape women's career paths at community colleges. The researchers describe community colleges as more open and considerably more accepting of women than four-year colleges and universities. In addition, they found a high percentage of women faculty in the community colleges in their study. (p. 1).

Slightly over 22 percent of the community colleges in the United States have women presidents (Lane, 2002, p. 5). "At least one study claims that women make up 39 percent of the No. 2 position in community colleges nationwide" (Curtis, 2002, p. 5). Do women in top executive leadership positions in community colleges share the same career detours as women in the corporate sector? What kinds of events do women in community college leadership perceive as career barriers? How to they react to them?

Women in executive leadership in community colleges are pulled from their career paths by family needs, just as are women in the corporate sector. For instance, Dr. Marsi Liddell, president of Aims Community College outside Denver, readily admits that family responsibilities certainly could cause a woman to take a detour from the usual route in her ascent to the presidency (Bagnato, 2005, p. 9). Family issues for women in executive leadership in community colleges are much the same as those for women in the corporate sector. They can be good, such as marriage and childbearing, or bad such as health crises, financial problems, separation/divorce, or loss of a loved one. Some events presented both good and bad aspects. Nevertheless, "Such events often acted as lenses, magnifying what was important and encouraging growth" (Ruderman and Ohlott, 2002, p. 181).

Even Margaret Spellings, United States Secretary of Education has a difficult time juggling family and career. A recent article in the *Charlotte Observer* describes her attempt to balance work and family issues:

> Juggling the roles of mom and policy maker hasn't been easy, especially when she was a divorced single parent. The move from Texas to Washington was especially tough. Spellings wanted her daughters to finish the 2000-01 school year in Austin, Texas, before leaving their friends. So she worked killer hours Mondays through Thursdays at the White House. On Fridays, she bolted from the West Wing by mid-morning to fly home and spend the weekend with her girls. 'It was one of the hardest work periods and personal periods I have ever gone through,' she said. (Dodge, 2006, p.17A)

Pamela Lewis, president of Queens University of Charlotte in Charlotte, North Carolina, expressed similar thoughts about the importance of family to career women. "While she doesn't encounter gender-related challenges in her job, she acknowledges that it's often difficult for working women to keep career and home life in balance" (Harris, 2003, p. S10).

When asked how she balanced life and work, Debbie Sydow, president of Onondaga Community College in Syracuse, New York, stated, "Balance is an elusive goal, one that I gave up on long ago. I give all the energy I can muster to my job and my family, and when I have exhausted all energy, I collapse. That's balance for me" (*The Central New York Business Journal*, 2003, p. 23).

Women in higher education, including community college leaders, face the same issues with elder care as their corporate counterparts. Caring for an aging parent or spouse can be a career-delaying situation. Dr. Dulcie Groves, Honorary Lecturer in

Social Policy, University of Lancaster, England, tells about the break she took from her

career to care for her dying mother. She shared her story in the following comments:

> In the autumn term of 1973…my 80-year old mother began to show the first signs
> of her final illness….My work was extremely time-consuming and I was in line
> for further responsibilities. It was difficult to put in as many weekend visits to my
> mother's house as I would have liked….I did very little academic work in my
> "caring break" for January to August 1975. My mother lived with me in
> Lancaster for four months, dying early in January 1977. (Groves, 1998, p. 122)

Still another career detour shared by women in corporate leadership and women

in executive leadership in higher education is personal health. Carol Cartwright,

president of Kent State University, has faced many hurdles in her life but has never fallen

off track. Recently though, this 62-year-old grandmother with the stamina of one of her

students recently experienced a health issue that could have been a career stall if not a

setback. The author of the article finishes the story:

> As if some final test to determine just how much she could really handle,
> Cartwright was diagnosed with breast cancer in the fall of 1992. Cartwright
> immediately shared her diagnosis with the Kent State community….Cartwright
> underwent a successful surgery, and has had no recurrence…."I saw it as a very
> teachable moment"…she says. (Haliburton and Winternitz, 2004, p. 91)

Ruderman and Ohlott (2002) point out, "Adversity takes many forms; it can

trigger development on many fronts. For example, health problems bring wholeness and

authenticity to the forefront. Soul-searching really steps up after a brush with injury or

life-threatening illness" (p. 178).

As a means of preventive medicine, women executives in higher education are

encouraged to take time for themselves and their families. A recent *Chronicle of Higher*

Education survey of four-year college presidents "reveals just how little time there is for fun. The most-often cited areas of their lives that presidents feel they have neglected because of their career are time with family, physical fitness, and leisure activities" (Strout, 2005, p. A34).

A woman leader who manages to find time for herself is Jo Ann Rooney, president of Spalding University in Louisville, Kentucky. She and Tori Murden McClure, the university's vice president for university relations, "have teamed up as a champion masters rowing team. The two started rowing together a year ago, and then began racing in a double scull. They took the gold medal at the Midwest Masters Championship Regatta this summer. The athletic duo is an anomaly in higher education" (Strout, 2005, pp. A34-A35). The article continues, "According to the survey, 49 percent of female college presidents never participate in sports while only 19 percent of their male counterparts never participate" (Strout, 2005, pp. A34-A35).

While women in the corporate sector face downsizing, transfers to lateral positions, and the glass cliff, community college leaders face a similar type of career roadblock called the revolving door. "For college presidents [including women] these days, getting too comfortable in the office is rarely an option. CEOs and CFOs are often brought in as 'turn-around specialists' to fix a problem and are then shown the door" (Bagnato, 2005, p.9). For example, before Dr. Marsi Liddell, President of Aims Community College outside Denver, came to the college in 2003, the Aims system had endured some rough times with several resignations and a couple of interim presidents before she took office. Dr. Liddell noted that she was expected to raise money and find

ways to save money. At the same time, accountability became a central focus at Aims. (Bagnato, 2005, p.7). Springer (2003) continues, "Women typically still lead the most troubled institutions; search committees, sometimes candidly admitting that men have failed, ask, 'Why not risk something different?'" (p. 26).

Lane (2002) quotes Dr. Narcisa Polonio with the Association of Community College Trustees, as she refers to another rather interesting potential roadblock for women in community college executive leadership.

> Women have often faced unreasonably high expectation about what they can achieve, especially if they are the first females to fill certain positions. By being unrealistic with our expectations of them, we set them up for failure….The stress of these high expectations, compounded by the fear of failure's consequences, has been difficult for women to overcome, and remain resilient obstacles to success. (p. 8)

Women are often passed over for the top executive positions by selection committees in both corporate and educational settings because they are perceived as less capable than men in handling difficult situations, especially financial crises. For instance, Dorothy Wedderburn, former Principal, Royal Holloway and Bedford New College, University of London, tells of being rejected for a leadership position in England's higher education system:

> In 1979 and 1980 I had been approached about becoming the head of one of two single-sex women's Oxbridge colleges. It was to become the head of a rather specialist institution, one of the colleges of the University of London, spanning the range of university disciplines in its teaching and research. I let my name go forward and to by great surprise was included in a final shortlist of two. But there I failed, for the selection committee felt that I would not be tough enough to deal with the major financial problems which were beginning to confront the higher education system. (Wedderburn, 1998, p.80)

In Tedrow and Rhoads' 1999 study of women in leadership roles at community colleges, the researchers note:

> One woman cut to the heart of the problem [of gender] when she said, 'I have learned that the best way to collaborate with the guys is to keep my mouth shut. To respect the "good ol' boys" and their power is important....I try to learn how their system works even though I can't get into it. I want to only know enough so I can do what it is that I need to do'. (p.11)

Just as women in the corporate sector need a support system, women community college executive leadership need one of their own. Family members provide a natural support system. Ruth Mercedes Smith (2001) conducted a survey on roles of spouses of female community college presidents. Not surprisingly, husbands/partners provided mentoring to their presidential mates. The results of the study revealed, "Over 68% of the male spouses reported that their wives asked for advice on specific issues; fiscal matters, personnel, union negotiations, legislators, reorganization, and marketing strategies (p. 232). Another spouse wrote, "We are in similar positions. Related managerial problems are sometimes similar enough to warrant joint discussion and problem-solving" (p. 232).

Unlike women in the corporate sector who felt that there was a lack of mentoring and female role models, women leaders in community colleges felt that mentors were partially responsible for their success.

> While community colleges may be more receptive to female leadership, many women in academe say role models, mentors, and supportive spouses and families have also contributed to their progress. While women tend to have different types of mentors—men and women, colleagues, friends or bosses—most agree that

without the guidance of these individuals, they could not have gotten where they are today. (Lane, 2002, p. 6)

For instance, Dr. Deborah DiCroce, president of Tidewater Community College in Norfolk, Virginia, remembered her experience with a mentor:

When you ask a woman who was her mentor, oftentimes, in the early years it was a man. It certainly was for me: a good old boy from Alabama, George Pass. You would have looked at Dr. Pass and said, "Would he have ever looked and seen potential in a woman to rise to the presidency?" No, it didn't fit his style. But he saw something in me that sparked potential….. He gave me the opportunity to grow professionally…and compete successfully. (Lane, 2002, p. 6)

Women in community college leadership choose a variety of paths to fulfill their ambitions. Fels (2004) feels that ambition is made up of two interdependent components, skill and recognition (p. 211). Women executives in community colleges often develop their skills through the attainment of an advanced degree—usually a doctorate. A recent study published in *Society* found that "the 17,322 Ph.D's awarded to women in 1997 were more than half again as many as the 11,432 given them in 1987" ("Women Gain Doctorates," 2000, p. 5). However, the path to a doctorate is not always easy for women who aspire to leadership positions in community colleges. For instance, Bel Wheelan, the first woman to head Northern Virginia Community College, is an example of someone who took several years to complete her doctorate. She started into the doctoral program at Louisiana State University intending to major in child psychology, but had to drop out when her mother got sick. In 1974, she returned to her home in San Antonio with her master's degree but knew that without a doctorate, she could only teach at the community college level. After Wheelan earned her doctorate in 1982 as part of the Community

College Leadership program at the University of Texas, she was in love with the concept of the community college system (Atwood, 2004, p. 2).

How do women leaders in community colleges react emotionally, cognitively, and behaviorally to the barriers to their career success and the resulting loss of recognition? Echoing Sheehy when she speaks of the cognition that comes with age, Dr. Ruth Simmons, the first female president of Brown University, reminds women in higher education that with age comes a sense of knowing how to balance work and personal life:

> First, be patient. This [high position] is coming after many, many years of learning. Don't rush it, because if you rush it, you'll miss some steps that you'll need later in life. Take your time. Pay attention to your spiritual life, pay attention to your [character] development. Second, keep in mind that a job is a job. But a life is something that is just too short. Live a life that you can be happy with. (Crayton, 2001, p. 106)

A few women in community college leadership let concern for life balance become a roadblock to advancement. They decide, "…It's [the presidency with accompanying recognition] not worth it….They hear horror stories about not having a life, about working 24/7, about how hard it is, and people don't want to make that choice" (Lane, 2002, p. 9). In the *Harvard Business Review*, Fels (2004) echoes these thoughts, "As contemporary women evaluate their goals, they must decide how much of the stress that comes with ambition they are willing to tolerate" (p. 8). Dr. Martha T. Nesbitt, president of Gainesville College in Gainesville, Georgia, says, "I think sometimes we paint too dark a picture of leadership roles and in particular the isolation of the presidency" (Lane, 2002, p. 9).

One reaction women have to career detours and barriers is to modify their career

goals. Ruderman and Ohlott (2002) state, "Women's managerial development is

influenced by the variety of life structures open to women, the variation in times to enter

and exit the workforce, and the impact of social change" (pp. 182-183). They add, "Life

pathways are influenced by many factors—your own desires, family influence,

unexpected events, and changing times. With so much variation, it is hard to identify

what is constant" (p.183). Fels (2004) observes, "Unexpected social constraints and

opportunities usually caused ambitions to be heightened, reformulated or abandoned" (p.

209). Pascall, Parker, and Evetts (2000) point out that in one of their studies, women in

higher education tended to describe their career plans as "a process of experiment,

reassessment, opening up to possibilities, rather than building a plan around a clear goal"

(p. 63). For instance, Clayton (2000) describes the career path of Elorna Daniel, who did

not have a career plan:

> The last thing on Elorna Daniel's mind while studying to be nurse in the 1960s
> was the notion that she might one day reach the pinnacle of the academy—a
> university presidency. "It is not anything I ever contemplated in my wildest
> dreams," laughs Dr. Daniel, who today presides over Chicago State University, an
> urban campus of 8,400 students. (Clayton, 2000, p. 14)

Lane (2002) quotes DiCroce's advice to aspiring women leaders in community

colleges: "Don't just say, 'In five years I'll be doing this, and a college president.' If you

do that, you miss the greatest joy of all, and that's the journey. The getting there is the

greatest part of it all" (p. 9).

Pascall, Parker, and Evetts (2000) take a realistic approach to changing career goals for women. They say, "Rather than choosing one goal--to be a 'career woman' or to be a 'mother', many have two long-term ends. Trying out a small step is the only way to find out whether they can make an acceptable accommodation when these ends are contradictory. This experimental method allows for evaluation and re-evaluation, as goals cannot be settled in a once-for-all manner" (p. 6).

These authors examined women's career strategies in banking and higher education. With regard to women re-routing themselves on their career paths after a detour or barrier, Pascall and Cox (as cited in Pascall, Parker, and Evetts, 1993) said, "Women return to higher education engaged in a process of experiment, reassessment, opening to possibilities, rather of a building a plan a career path to a set goal" (p. 63) Pascall, Parker, and Evetts (1993) continue, "Women [in higher education] acknowledged the accepted wisdom that a goal-oriented strategy for building their careers would have been more appropriate" (p. 63).

How can women in higher education, especially in community college leadership, have such flexibility in their career goals? Why do they feel, to some degree, that they still have a chance for deserved recognition? Part of the answer lies in the fact that community colleges are more gender-diverse than four-year institutions of higher education. They are often more open-minded about women in leadership positions. "According to the American Association of Community Colleges, 58 percent of community college students are women, while only 55 percent of the student population at four-year institutions is female" (Lane, 2002, p. 5). Dr. Martha Nesbitt, president of

Gainesville College in Gainesville, Georgia, said the relative newness of the community colleges to the higher education system has also been a boon for women. "We are the newest kid on the block. Most two-year colleges really got their start in the 1960s and 1970's so they weren't as bound by tradition as universities and state colleges" (Lane, 2002, p. 5). According to Lynn C. Coleman, vice president of administration and finance at Howard Community College in Columbia, Maryland, because community colleges are smaller than many colleges and universities, women have more opportunities for leadership. "You have more roles and responsibilities than at a four-year school. It's sort of like being a big fish in a little pond" (Lane, 2002, p. 5).

With the exception of a few remnants of the "good ol' boys" networks, some shards of the glass ceiling, and a combination of overachievement and self-doubt, women in leadership positions in community colleges have found an organization that allows them the opportunity to take career detours, encounter roadblocks, and make course corrections without severe damage. While these women are pulled and pushed from their career paths just as women in the corporate sector are, they tend to maintain their resiliency and do not lose their ambition and drive for recognition to the degree that corporate women leaders do. This drive often takes on different forms as they navigate their respective organizations. Fels (2004) notes, "Ambitions can be transformed throughout life.... They can be redirected at different stages of life....They are remarkably fluid" (p. 133). The newness and openness of community colleges provide women leaders opportunities to reroute themselves after encountering career detours or barriers.

CHAPTER III

METHODOLOGY

This study sought to identify the incidents that were perceived as career detours by women in executive leadership positions in community colleges. It sought to understand how these women dealt with their career detours and still managed to reach their career goal. Also, this research looked at the comparison/contrast of the ways women in the corporate sector and women in higher education handle perceived barriers to career fulfillment—their emotional, psychological and cognitive responses. Finally, it looked at the lessons the women in executive leadership in community colleges learned and how they applied those lessons to the achievement of their career goals. In addition, this study examined the similarities and dissimilarities between women in community college executive leadership positions and those in the corporate sector. Data were collected in two phases—qualitative and quantitative. Information gathered from open-ended interviews and numeric data gathered from the survey were used to help provide answers to the research questions.

Phase I, the qualitative study, consisted of a series of telephone interviews with women vice presidents and presidents. These women were asked to give personal examples of events in their lives that caused them to either put their careers on hold or to forego advancement temporarily. They were asked what they learned from these

experiences and what advice they would give to women who aspired to be in prominent leadership positions in a community college.

Phase II, the quantitative study, consisted of a survey based on the trends identified from the interviews. Respondents were given multiple-choice questions incorporating responses collected from interviews. They were asked to mark all responses that applied to their personal journey to community college leadership.

This study combined qualitative and quantitative methods to look at the perceptions of and reactions to career detours/barriers by women in executive leadership roles in community colleges. Sometimes called mixed methods research, the combination of the two worked in a complementary and mutually supportive fashion.

Although relatively new, mixed methods research has come of age in the social and human sciences (Creswell, 2003, p. 4). The use of such an approach is justified by the following statements:

> The situation today is less quantitative versus qualitative and more how research practices lie somewhere on a continuum between the two.... The practice of research involves much more than philosophical assumptions. Philosophical ideas must be combined with broad approaches to research and implemented with specific procedures. Thus, a framework is needed that combines the elements of philosophical ideas, strategies, and methods. (Creswell, 2003, p. 4)

Borland (2001) stresses that a combination of qualitative and quantitative research does not mutually exclude one or the other. He states:

> Within the past thirty to thirty-five years some have questioned the relevance of traditional empirical research, arguing that experimental designs create an artificial environment that results in artificial reactions or behaviors on the part of the participants. Qualitative research methods have been advanced as the only

way to understand truth: to study the subject holistically rather than by controlling all of its aspects but one…The relationship between qualitative and quantitative research should not be considered in terms of a mutually exclusive dichotomy but rather as a continuum of complementary paradigms within systematic scientific inquiry. (p. 5)

There are several reasons why a combination of qualitative and quantitative research methods was appropriate for this study. First, it is difficult to quantitatively measure perceptions and reactions to career detours/barriers. Since qualitative methods reveal trends rather than explicit numbers, these methods were used to obtain a holistic picture of how women leaders in community colleges react to career detours/barriers. In an article for New Directions for Institutional Research, Borland (2001) makes the following comment:

Qualitative research yields valuable knowledge for decision makers. When conducted with appropriate levels of structure and a balance of objectivity and subjectivity to increase certainty, it provides theories, models, and descriptions of human experiences and perceptions within particular contexts. (p. 8)

In this study, the qualitative and quantitative data were collected in sequential phases. The qualitative data collection was done first in order to explore the topic of career detours and perceived barriers for women in executive leadership roles in community colleges. In the second phase, quantitative data were collected from a larger sample of community college women leaders in order expand understanding of the perceptions of these career detours and barriers. In addition, quantitative data were collected and analyzed to further define the reactions of these women leaders to their career detours.

Data Collection Procedures

This research was a mixed methods study (Creswell, 2003, p. 4). Phase I consisted of telephone interviews of a purposeful sample of women who were selected because they serve as presidents and vice presidents of community colleges (see Appendix A).

After a thorough review of the research topic, nine general interview questions were developed. These questions were then scrutinized for terms that might need defining or changing. Last, they were revised to focus more specifically on the research questions.

Participants were selected from membership lists for the American Association of Women in Community Colleges, the National Alliance for Community and Technical Colleges, the American Association of Community Colleges, and the National Association of Community College Teacher Education Programs. The women serving as presidents or vice presidents of community colleges were interviewed with the "goal of identifying information-rich cases" (Mertens, 1998, p. 261) that allowed an in-depth study of the research problem. Twenty-two informed respondents—women who were community college presidents or vice presidents from various geographic regions of the country—agreed to participate in the study. The purposeful sample consisted of eight presidents and 14 vice presidents. Data analysis from Phase I of the study yielded a set of patterns/trends that were used to construct a grounded survey instrument for Phase II.

At the beginning of Phase I, two weeks were allotted for the interview process; however, due to scheduling issues and time zone differences, the process took almost

seven weeks. The calls to initiate the interviews originated from the Eastern Standard Time Zone which often meant as much as a three-hour difference for those participants on the West Coast.

An introductory telephone call was made to each president/vice president in order to make an appointment for an interview. Since local college affairs often took precedent over the interviews, it often required three or four tries before an appointment could be obtained with a president. Usually, just two calls were necessary to schedule and to interview the vice presidents who participated in the interview.

In Phase I, the term "career setback" was used in the interview questions. However, early in the process most of the respondents wanted to talk about their less drastic career detours rather than their career setbacks, so the interview questions were reformatted to reflect the change in language. The respondents did not see incidents that seemed to stall their careers as barriers, but instead viewed them as temporary and worked their way around them.

The presidents and vice presidents were very receptive to participating in the interview. They spoke at length about their perceived career detours, their reactions to them, the lessons they learned from them, and their perceptions of opportunities for advancement for women in four-year colleges and universities.

Following Mertens' advice (1998), each conversation began with a review of the purpose of the interview, the researcher's credentials, and any other information that was needed. Assurances of confidentiality were provided. During the interview, listening intently was absolutely necessary in order to understand the respondents' answers to the

questions. Occasionally, clarification was requested if a response was not clear. The questions were sequenced from general to specific. Paraphrasing was used to summarize the participants' responses and check for the accuracy in recording the responses. A constructive framework was used to structure questions when asking for criticism of any specific item. The interview ended with the respondents answering an opinion statement asking for their thoughts about career detours for women leaders in four-year colleges and universities, the corporate sector, and not-for-profit organizations (pp.133-134).

Twenty minutes was allotted for each interview; however, often the time was extended to 30 minutes. Twenty-one of the 22 respondents talked at length about instances in their careers that caused them to take a detour. Many elaborated on specific events that caused temporary career interruptions. For example, one community college president spoke candidly for 30 minutes and then supplied the text of a recent speech she had given because it illustrated her philosophy about encountering career detours/barriers. Responses were written in longhand, using abbreviations and business shorthand techniques in order to prevent long pauses in the conversations. These methods allowed the participants' entire thoughts to be captured while taking up a minimum of their time, out of respect for their busy schedules. A handwritten thank-you note was sent to each person who participated in Phase I of this study.

Phase II consisted of a survey designed to study career detours and perceived barriers to career goals of women in executive leadership roles in community colleges across the country. The survey was sent to a purposeful sample of women currently serving as either president or vice president of a community college in the United States

(see Appendix C). The sampling design was single-stage. According to Creswell (2003),

"A single-stage sampling procedure is one in which the researcher has access to names in

the population and can sample the people [or other elements] directly" (p. 156).

The survey instrument was developed based on the informed respondents'

answers to the interview questions. All participants in Phase II were asked the same

questions to ensure accurate measurements of the results. The survey included

demographics, attitudinal items, behavioral items, and factual items referencing the

respondents' personal feelings and actions in response to a career detour or barrier.

Participants

In Phase I, 22 women serving as either a vice president or president of a

community college were interviewed. The criterion for participation in Phase I was that

the chosen women had served as senior executives or as chief officers/presidents in

community colleges for at least one year. Geographically, the interview participants were

spread across the United States.

Initially, 23 presidents/vice presidents were invited to take part in the survey

phase of this research. However, one president refused to participate, stating that she had

a policy of giving interviews only to members of her staff who were working toward an

advanced degree.

Phase II consisted of a cross-sectional study. Nardi (2003) points out, "When a

survey is given at one point in time and only once to a particular sample of respondents, it

is referred to as a cross-sectional study" (p. 109). Again, purposeful sampling was used to

select the participants in Phase II. They had to meet the same criteria as those in Phase I.

For instance, each woman needed to be in her executive leadership role at a community

college for at least one year. Also, she needed to be active in a wide range of

professional activities. A national sample was chosen for this phase of the research.

Organizations such as the National Council of Instructional Administrators, the American

Association of Women in Community Colleges, the National Alliance of Community and

Technical Colleges, the National Council for Staff, Program and Organizational

Development, and the American Association of Community Colleges were sources for

the names of the women in community college leadership roles who participated in this

study.

 Participants were assured that all responses would be held in confidence. The

survey was sent to the participants as an e-mail attachment. Consent to participate in the

study was obtained through an explanation that accompanied each e-mail survey (see

Appendix B). Returning the survey indicated informed consent from the participants.

<div align="center">Data Analysis Procedures</div>

 Data obtained from the Phase I interviews provided demographic details that

included educational background, professional advancement, self-image, definition of a

career detour or perceived barrier, reaction to career detours/perceived barriers, and

length of time spent in a leadership position. Mertens (1998) notes, "The data will be

broken down into discrete parts, closely examined, compared for similarities and

difference, and questions asked about the phenomena as reflected in the data" (p. 352).

Coffey and Atkinson (1996) describe the linkage of concepts and data:

> Many analyses of qualitative data begin with the identification of key themes and patterns. This, in turn, often depends on processes of coding data. The segmenting and coding of data are often taken-for-granted parts of the qualitative research process. All researchers need to be able to organize, manage, and retrieve the most meaningful bits of our data. The usual way of going about this is by assigning tags or labels to the data, based on our concepts. Essentially, what we are doing in these instances in condensing the bulk of our data sets into analyzable unity by creating categories with and from our data. (p. 26)

The dependent variable for this study was the goal/ambition of the women in executive leadership positions in community colleges, and the independent variable was their perception of behaviors, attitudes, and facts that they felt caused their careers to be detoured/stalled temporarily.

Each response was taken apart and a name or label was given to each incident, idea, or event, however large or small. This information led to basic questions, such as Who? When? Where? What? How? How much? And Why? (Mertens, 1998, p. 352). Thematic areas/patterns emerged from the analysis of the data as the frequency of recurring descriptors was tabulated. Since the number of interviewees was small as was the number of interview questions, no analytical software packages were employed. Referencing computer software, Coffey and Atkinson (1996) say, "There is no great conceptual advance over the indexing of typed or even manuscript notes and transcripts or of marking them physically with code words, colored inks, and the like" (p. 171).

After the interviews were completed, the responses were studied for the presence of any common themes. Coffey and Atkinson (1996) observe, "Reading through data

extracts, one might discover particular events, key words, processes, or characters that capture the essence of the piece" (p. 31). Next, each conversation was transcribed, and the responses to interview questions were put into a Microsoft Excel spreadsheet. This file simply gave a visual format to the responses from the interviews. It provided the starting point for the development of prominent themes that were reflected by the women's responses. Coffey and Atkinson (1996) state, "We use the data to think with, in order to generate ideas that are thoroughly and precisely related to our data" (p. 27). Next, coding began by cutting and pasting responses from the first spreadsheet to the second one in order to create a visual representation of the conceptual schemes that came from the interview responses. Coffey and Atkinson (1996) make the following statements:

> They [themes/conceptual schemes] are organizing principles that are not set in stone. They are tools to think with. They can be expanded, changed or scrapped altogether as our ideas develop through repeated interactions with the data. Starting to create categories is a way of beginning to read and think about the data in a systematic and organized way. (p. 32)

The themes and sub-themes were identified. Coffey and Atkinson (1996) remark, "These ideas can be wholly your own or can use or transform the ideas of others, such as researchers in the same field, philosophers, professionals, and the respondents themselves" (p. 140). Results were listed in absolute raw numbers of occurrences.

In Phase II, a 31-item survey was developed using trends form the interviews in Phase I as the basis for formulating questions/items (see Appendix C). Two hundred forty-eight women in executive leadership roles in community colleges were asked to

take part in the survey. None of these women took part in Phase I of this research. The purpose of the survey was to identify how women in leadership positions in community colleges processed career detours and perceived career barriers and if they changed as a result.

Research analysts in Central Piedmont Community College's Planning and Research Department formatted the electronic survey using college software. When the survey was formatted and ready for distribution, the analysts provided a World Wide Web address that was linked to the survey. Respondents could thus access the survey and complete it online, submitting their responses to a database for analysis. The survey was tested before being launched to make sure that it was easily accessible to the respondents.

An e-mail message was composed that contained a greeting, an introduction of the researcher, a description of the study, the purpose of the survey, a notice of confidentiality, the instructions for accessing the survey through the Web, and telephone numbers to call if the respondents had questions about the survey. (See Appendix B.) In addition, respondents were told that they could stop at any point in the study, and their privacy would be honored. The respondents could request a copy of the results of this study if they desired. One respondent chose to step out of this research before completing the survey. She commented, "I did attempt to complete this survey but really got stuck because at some point, in order to continue answering the questions, the respondent just really needed to define that she had 'given up' or compromised something in her career pursuit." The respondent continued, "I just kept hammering along

in my career while having four kids and a husband who lived in another city, and yes, it was hard. My whole family had to compromise."

The survey was successfully distributed via e-mail and the Web to 248 potential respondents. Mertens (1998) notes that mail or e-mail is good for collecting detailed information in a closed-ended format at a relatively low cost (p. 109). Originally, 344 surveys were sent to presidents and vice presidents of community college across the United States, but 96 were undeliverable because of firewalls or other protective software in the recipients' servers. Thus, a total of 248 surveys were received by potential respondents. Thirty-three surveys were returned from the initial distribution. Two additional reminders were sent out as e-mail messages after the initial responses were collected. Neither names nor identifying numbers were used as identification in the data collection phase of this study, so in keeping with Nardi's (2003) advice, reminders were sent to everyone, including those who already returned their surveys. The reminders acknowledged those who already sent their forms back (pp. 111-112). The first and second reminder messages resulted in 20 and 16 additional responses respectively. Finally, as a means to increase the response rate, 50 participants of the 248 were chosen at random to receive hard copies in the mail. This sample size for the hard copies was chosen to strike a balance between increasing the response rate and keeping the cost of printing and mailing under control. The hard copies were accompanied by a letter that acknowledged those individuals who might have already responded to the electronic version. Sixteen surveys were returned as a result of the mail distribution of the survey. Nardi (2003) notes, "Given the limited time and money most of us have to do a short

survey…consider giving out a hundred surveys…with the hope that half will reply (after some reminders) in order to get a small sample size of fifty respondents" (p. 111). Nardi (2003) continues "Usually 20 to 30 percent of people who receive questionnaires return them right away" (p. 111). After the first electronic distribution, two reminders, and a final hard copy distribution, a total of 85 responses were received for an overall response rate of 34 percent. See Table 3.1 below for a summary of response rates at each step.

Table 3.1: Response Rate to Survey

Date	Distribution Method	Number of Responses
6/12/2006	Electronic (e-mail)	33
6/21/2006	Electronic (e-mail)	20
7/6/2006	Electronic (e-mail)	16
7/17/2006	Hard Copy (mail)	16

It was assumed that the survey recipients followed the instructions in the reminders not to complete the survey again if they had previously completed it. In other words, it was assumed that no duplicate surveys were received.

Several respondents had difficulty accessing the survey using the Web address provided in the original e-mail message. They called or e-mailed the researcher for assistance. In most cases, they had trouble following directions for accessing the survey through the link provided. After receiving a new set of directions, they were able to access the survey, complete it, and return it. In addition, a few could not open the link to the survey no matter how often they tried. These respondents asked to be sent a copy of

the survey in the mail. Every mailed survey was returned. At that point, the researcher

accessed the electronic survey and completed it using the respondents' written answers.

This same process was followed with the 16 surveys that were returned after the round of

hard-copy mailings.

The survey data were analyzed using frequency tables to indicate how often the

respondents gave a particular response. The Central Piedmont Community College

Planning and Research Department compiled the frequency tables. "The frequency for

each value is [was] listed in absolute raw numbers of occurrence and in percentages

relative to the number of total responses" (Nardi, 2003, p. 116).

Microsoft Excel was used in the data analysis for the remainder of the study. For

instance, histograms were used to show the frequency of response frequencies for various

questions. McClave and Sincich (1997) explain that a relative frequency histogram lets

the reader see if some categories of responses appear more often than others (31).

Inferential statistics were used to compare the differences between the variables.

Basically, chi-square was used to see if the data fit an assumed frequency model.

According to Nardi (2003), The chi-square test "measures how independent the two

variables are and asks if what you [observed] is significantly different from what you

would have expected to get by chance alone (p. 144). "The calculation looks at each cell

and measures the difference between the actual frequency you got and the frequency that

you would have expected by chance" (Nardi, 2003, p. 144). "Chi-square tells us whether

two variables are associated" (Nardi, 2003, p. 152).

This test was used on responses to pairs of questions, and the goal was to determine if the distribution of these paired responses could be explained by chance alone. In this study, all chi-square tests were carried out with one degree of freedom and a significance level of 0.10 (90 percent confidence).

For all such tests the following general hypotheses were used:

- Null: The pattern of answers to the two questions under consideration could be explained through a bivariate binominal distribution, using probabilities based on the fraction of "yes" answers to each question.

- Alternative: The pattern of answers showed some degree of dependence that could not be explained by the above distribution. Whether this dependence was positive (both "no" or both "yes") or negative (one "no" and one "yes") would be determined through inspection of the data.

To investigate the effect of age and experience on women's perceptions regarding career detours, the response data were analyzed using a series of t-tests on the proportion of "yes" answers. Responses were broken up into three levels for each category (age and experience), and independent-sampling test procedures were used on each pair of sample proportions. This method was used instead of an analysis of variance because the sizes of the samples were markedly different from each other. In addition, a chi-square test was not used because some of the sample sizes were small enough to make the results unreliable.

The following general hypotheses were used for the t-tests, considering two age/experience groups at a time:

- Null: The proportions of "yes" answers did not differ significantly between groups.

- Alternative: The proportions of "yes" answers did differ significantly.

The null hypothesis in each case was that the two proportions being compared were equal; the alternative hypothesis was that they were different, meaning that the two groups held different attitudes concerning the question of interest. This particular approach required the use of a two-tailed t-test.

A significance level of 0.10 was used for all tests, and the degrees of freedom depended on the number of data points in each sample. This level was chosen instead of the customary 0.05 due to limitations imposed by small sample sizes. A preliminary estimate of 95 percent confidence intervals for proportions of "yes" responses yielded a number of cases in which the interval boundaries fell above 1 or below 0 (both physically impossible). Therefore, the simplest remedy was to narrow the confidence limits.

For the above analysis, the age data were broken into three groups as follows: 30-39 and 40-49 together, 50-59, and 60-69. This was done because only one respondent fell into the 30-39 age group. The three levels of experience specified in Question 6 (0-5 years, 6-10 years, 11+ years) were used as given, since the numbers of respondents in those three groups were not as unequal as in the age calculations.

CHAPTER IV

FINDINGS

The purpose of this study was to examine the factors that cause women in community college executive leadership positions to detour from their original career plans. This study examined the similarities and dissimilarities with women in community college leadership and their contemporaries in the corporate world. It looked at how women leaders in community colleges respond emotionally, cognitively, and behaviorally to interruptions/detours in their career paths into leadership. This study looked at the lessons women leaders in community colleges and business learn from these interruptions/barriers. Data were collected in two phases, one qualitative and one quantitative. Information gathered from open-ended interviews and numeric data gathered from a survey were used to help provide answers to the research questions.

Phase I, the qualitative study, consisted of interviews of a national sample of women vice presidents and presidents in community colleges. They were asked to give personal examples of events in their lives that caused them to either put their careers on hold temporarily or to forego advancement for a short time. They were asked what they learned from these experiences and what advice they would give to a woman who aspired to hold a prominent leadership position in a community college.

Phase II consisted of a grounded survey based on the trends identified from the interviews. Respondents were given multiple-choice questions incorporating responses gathered during the interviews. They were asked to mark all responses that applied to their personal journey to community college leadership.

This study combined qualitative and quantitative methods to look at the perceptions of and reactions to career detours/stalls by women in executive leadership roles in community colleges. Sometimes called mixed-methods research, the combination of these two approaches worked in a complementary and mutually supportive fashion.

The model for identifying perceived career detours and barriers and their resulting effects on among women in executive administrative positions in community colleges was developed in two phases. Phase I was composed of an interview series, and phase II was a survey developed from trends and attributes identified in Phase I.

Phase I: Interviews

Phase I used an interview to capture the perceptions of and reactions to career detours/stalls by 22 women vice presidents and presidents across the United States (see Table 4.1). Six community college presidents and 16 vice presidents participated in the interviews. Questions were open-ended, and respondents often gave multiple answers. The interview was designed to capture the resources that these women used to help them work through the emotional, political, and professional repercussions of a career detour. In addition, it sought to capture the changes in attitude and behavior due to

transformational learning that took place as a result of their career setbacks. The 22

women who participated in the interview phase of the study were candid in their

responses and willing to talk about what they learned from their career detours and

perceived barriers.

Table 4.1: Geographic Distribution of Participants

Area of U.S.	Responses	Presidents	Vice Presidents
Northeast (ME, NH, VT, MA, CT, RI, NY, PA. NJ)	2	1	1
Southeast (FL, GA, NC, SC, VA, DE, MD, DC)	5	0	5
Midwest (IL, MI, IN, OH, MN, WI, KS, MO, IA)	4	0	4
South (TN, MS, LA, KY, AL, WV, AR, OK, TX)	5	3	2
Northwest (AK, OR, WA, ID)	1	1	0
West (NV, CO, MT, UT, WY)	2	0	2
Southwest (CA, NM, AZ, HI)	3	1	2
Totals	22	6	16

A career detour is often an event or series of events that cause individuals to leave

the workforce temporarily or permanently. Hewlett and Luce (2005) list some examples

of events that might pull women from their career paths including, marriage,

childbearing, health crises, financial problems, divorce, or loss of a loved one (p. 44).

The interview responses of the participants yielded eight prominent themes. Four

were related to the causal factors for career detours and barriers—"pull" factors such as

family and health related issues, and "push" factors such as organizational issues, gender

issues in community colleges, and need for advanced education, specifically a doctorate.

Four additional themes were tied to the support women in executive leadership roles experienced as they dealt with career detours--encouragement by family and colleagues, emotional intelligence, mentoring, and the openness of community colleges to the movement of women into executive leadership positions. The women interviewed in Phase I remained focused on their career goals despite having to take a career detour imposed either by self, the college organization, or by external forces. Fels (2004) emphasizes, "You must have the motivation to pursue your ambition over time and in the face of the inevitable obstacles" (p. 73).

Causal Factors for Career Detours

In several cases, the women executives were influenced by the impact of the white, middle-class ideas of femininity. According to Fels (2004), "Being sensitive to and providing for the needs of others, even at the expense of her own needs, is the emotional core of a woman's femininity. Women who act on their own behalf, rather than that of others risk being seen as unfeminine" (p. 54).

Fels (2004) poses the following questions in reference to women putting the fulfillment of others' ambition before their own:

> What happens when a husband wants to move overseas to advance his career even if it disrupts…the wife's goals…? What happens when her partner's meetings last later and later into the night and there's no parent home with the children unless she leaves her workplace early….How does she deal with the tension that arises if her career advances faster and further than her husband's or if she has a career opportunity that requires a move? (p. 51)

Career advancement can often be more complicated for women than for men.

Putting Everything on Hold: Family and Personal Health Issues

Nine of the 22 women interviewed pointed out that positive as well as negative events in one's family could be the source of career stalls for women leaders in community colleges (see Appendix A). For example, one respondent noted that she gave birth to a child when she was transitioning into a vice president's position. Instead, "[I] took an associate vice president's position because of the responsibility of a newborn, but within a year, I had accepted a full vice presidency." This same individual revealed that she has postponed seeking a presidency. She stated, "I could have transitioned into a full presidency some time ago, but because of my child I do not want to take on those responsibilities right now—including travel."

Another example of family-related issues was the refusal to take a new position because it was not the right time for the husband and his career objectives (see Appendix A). One respondent noted, "I was married to a man whose rapidly moving career required that he relocate frequently, and I moved with him every three or four years. As a result, my career fell apart." She continued, "I wanted to be a dean in a school of education so I could have an impact on Latino children, but my husband's moves prevented me from working in a state university." This respondent further stated, "I took a number of different jobs including working for a community-based agency and working in K-12. Finally, my husband and I divorced, and I began to rebuild my career in a community college."

Another respondent said, "I fully intended to teach in a four-year liberal arts college and was actually offered a teaching job in such a college, but I turned it down because my husband couldn't find work in that location. This incident helped me decide to stay in my current position in the local community college."

One respondent had served as a dean of students for 16 when her husband took early retirement, and they moved to the Southwest for his health. She stated, "I had trouble getting back into higher education as a result [of the move], even though my former president sent letters to all the community college presidents in the state. No job offers came. She continued, "After working as a substitute teacher for a time, I took a lesser position as a director in a local community college. I worked hard and showed the institution my skills and that I knew how to solve problems. Eventually, I moved into a vice presidency."

Some women accepted detours in their careers in order to get over personal health issues such as the death of a parent, spouse, or child or to care for aging parents. Two respondents to the interview questions illustrated the case of family hardships that were out of their control but still affected their careers. One respondent revealed that one of her four sons died two years ago. She said, "I could not have taken advantage of opportunities—I had to put everything on hold because of the emotional adjustment to this issue. I eventually got back on track." Another interview participant shared that after her husband died, it took a full year for her to feel that she could fully perform her duties as vice president emotionally and physically. She said, "It [her husband's death] slowed me down but didn't stop me. I came back to work after his death to give some order to

my life, but death had a physical effect on my brain." She explained, "I found I couldn't conjugate some verbs in normal conversations when I walked around campus. It took me a whole year before I felt somewhat like my old self—feeling confident in myself again."

One administrator recalled, "I never completed my Ph.D. because as an only child, I became the caretaker for my mother who was ill. I got two-thirds of the way through my dissertation but never finished." When she returned to the community college after her mother's death, she felt like she had experienced a career detour. She went on to add, "I've had my own battle with cancer to fight." She continued, "This was an emotional experience for me and my colleagues who are good friends."

Others went through career detours because of divorces. One respondent remembered that her biggest career stall came as the result of a highly visible divorce. "Prior to my divorce, I wanted to get a PhD at the state university, but after my divorce I was mentally, physically, and emotionally too strained to go to graduate school. The divorce didn't keep me from reaching my goal—it just delayed me for a while. I finally got my degree."

Opening Closed Doors: Need for an Advanced Degree

Another frequent reason for a career detour was the lack of an advanced degree. Eight of the 22 respondents to the interview reported that they needed an advanced degree to move beyond a current career detour/barrier (see Appendix A, Question 3). Some women voluntarily went into a stall in order to complete work for the degree,

usually a doctorate. A study by the National Opinion Research Center at the University of Chicago revealed the following:

> The annual total of women receiving Ph.D.s has increased by more than 50 percent in a decade, growing at over twice the rate of men getting those degrees, a recent study found. As a result, a record 40.6 percent of more than 42,000 research doctorates awarded by United States universities in the 1996-97 academic year went to women, according to the annual study by the National Opinion Research Center at the University of Chicago….Most Ph.D. students in the study spent about seven years earning the degree. (*Society*, 2000, p. 5)

One respondent to the interview noted, "If I wanted to have all doors open for career advancement, then I needed a doctorate. I needed to go to school full-time, so I quit my full-time position at a college." She added, "Interestingly, at one point before I quit to go to school full time, my determination to finish my degree was questioned when a promotion came up, and I was asked by administrators if I might put off pursuing my doctorate if I got the job." She finished, "I did not put off getting my doctorate. I could not have finished it, however, without the support of my husband."

Another respondent, who came to leadership in the community college from the manufacturing sector remembered, "I hadn't planned to go into accounting—I wanted to go into education, but I went to work for a mining organization in the accounting department. My supervisor told me I couldn't advance any further without an accounting degree." She continues, "By this time I had a husband and children, so getting an accounting degree was difficult but worth the time and effort." She summarized, "Even after I got my accounting degree, I was still thinking about teaching and knew I needed a master's degree to teach."

Push Factors: Organizational Politics

Seven of the 22 women interviewed reported that organizational issues pushed them into career detours (see Appendix A, Question 4). Included in the "push" factors were lack of vision by executive leadership, failure to achieve an internal promotion, and lack of clear communication from administrators. According to Hewlett and Luce (2005), women indicated that in addition to those events that pulled them away from their career such as family issues, there were some organizational factors that made them take a career detour. These included jobs that were not satisfying or meaningful, lack of opportunity, and overly demanding work (p. 44).

For example, one respondent related, "The president of the [community] college decided to reorganize and created a vice president's position. I had worked at the college for 15 years in a variety of positions and had literally worked my way up through the ranks" She added, "At the time I was serving as a dean who reported to the president rather than the chief academic officer, and I applied for the new position although I was a rather non-traditional applicant. She continued, "The search was closed after a small pool of 'perfect' applicants was selected, and although I was an internal candidate, I wasn't one of them." This respondent concluded, "I was disappointed and cried for a day. However, I knew I had to get over it and move on. I refocused my energy to finish my dissertation. I successfully defended and when a vice presidency at another community college opened, I applied and got the position."

Still another respondent cited one college's reorganization that pushed her into a career detour. She said, "A new president came in and brought his own executive vice

president who proceeded to move everyone under her around. The college was totally disrupted." She continued, "During this mess, I was offered a vice presidency, but I turned it down, and the executive vice president proceeded to make life miserable for everyone as a result of my refusal to take the new position. She lacked the ability to see the 'big picture.'"

A few women in the interview felt that a lack of internal support from their community colleges kept them from advancing in their careers. Such support from faculty is key to success for college administrators. An article in *Community College Week* (2003) notes that Dr. Karen Grosz, president of New Hampshire Community Technical Colleges, was recently fired in part due to lack of confidence in her by the faculty. "Opposition to Grosz apparently was centered at the Laconia campus, where an informal poll of faculty in 2002 showed a lack of confidence in Grosz" (p. 12). According to a review of back issues of the *Chronicle of Higher Education*, "There have been more than a dozen faculty votes of no confidence in presidents or other top officials in the last five years….And they occur at all kinds of institutions—large and small, public and private, community colleges and the occasional major research university" (Shaw, 2005, p.1).

Who is most affected by a vote of no confidence and how? Obviously, the president and his/her family are the most personally affected by a vote of no confidence by the faculty.

> People don't aspire to these positions in hopes of failing or disappointing their most important constituency. The experience can leave presidents defensive and with considerable self-doubt. Even if they rise above it, they feel a blight on their record. The odds are that the situation will end badly; even if it doesn't, it may

make changing jobs and finding a position at another university [college] difficult. (Shaw, 2005, p. 1)

Remnants of the "Good Ol' Boys" Network: Gender Issues

Nine of the 22 women interviewed responded that gender issues caused career detours for them (see Appendix A, Questions 1 and 9). In a survey conducted with 70 attendees at the Leadership Institute for a New Century through the Iowa Association for Community College Trustees, the Iowa Association of Community College Presidents, and Iowa State University Higher Education Program, "The majority of women …believed their biggest hurdle to advancement was the mind-set of community college boards of trustees" (Ebbers, Gallisath, and Rockel, 2000, p. 379). They felt that the trustees were looking for candidates that fit into their masculine view of how a president should look and sound (Ebbers, Gallisath, and Rockel, 2000, p. 6).

Another example of gender issues in the community college was cited by one respondent who said, "There was a perception among [the mostly male] board members that a woman could not handle the complexities of the presidency. As a result, I ended up going outside to another college."

One respondent noted that gender issues were prevalent in her institution. She noted, "A woman doing the same job as a man can have a hindrance because of less visibility than men have. Women often have limited networking opportunities. For example, women who don't play golf can't schmooze with executives in education or in the community; therefore, it's difficult to develop relationships." One respondent commented, "Men have a much easier road into leadership positions that women—career

detours/barriers are probably equally dramatic but men might move on to another position. Many women tend to hold on to their current positions."

Interestingly, one president told the story of how, as the chief academic officer in another college, she was asked by her president to get three non-functioning deans mobilized. She said, "Naturally, the deans didn't like being held accountable by a woman, so they went to the president and complained that I was being too task-oriented. I was asked to back off." She concluded, "The president forced a meeting with the deans, and I was asked to apologize to them. I was angry because I had done only what I was asked to do; however, I tried to establish a working relationship with the deans until I could find another position."

Sources of Support

What helped these women make it through a career stall and go on to successful careers as executives in community colleges? (see Appendix A, Question 3.) As a whole, the women in the interview were extremely resilient. They were not bitter or angry about their career holds. This is amazing considering Springer's statement (2003): "Search firms tell us that it is common for aspiring [college] presidents to endure five to 10 searches before securing a position. Under such circumstances, it is hard to maintain faith in the journey" (p. 25). In contrast, Ruderman and Ohlott (2002) note that women "generally see events as interconnected. They examine how the different pieces of their lives fit together and even see hardships as part of their own evolution" (p. 148).

An analysis of the respondents' answers to the interview questions revealed four elements that make up the resiliency of the women leaders in the community college setting: support by family, professional colleagues, and friends; emotional intelligence; mentoring; and the openness of community colleges to women leaders.

Getting Over Career Road Bumps: Support by Family and Colleagues

Fourteen of the 22 women executives interviewed revealed that a combination of the support of their family, professional colleagues, and friends was instrumental in helping them move past a career stall (see Appendix A, Question 2). Lane (2002) agrees with the respondents:

> Equally crucial for their success, say many women in community college leadership, is an understanding and supportive family. Community college leadership positions often require a woman to move several times from one state to another, and her hours extend well beyond the 9-to-5 realm. Having a family that not only understands these demands but that is willing to alter its lifestyle to accommodate the profession's demands has helped many women succeed. (p. 7)

One respondent truly had the support of her family to get through a detour in her career and in her personal life. She said, "My parents moved across the country to provide emotional support and child care for two years while I got over a divorce and worked on my doctorate."

After her husband's death, one vice president relied on the support of her colleagues and especially her president. She noted, "He [the president] took time to ask how I was doing emotionally and offered me time off to adjust mentally and emotionally to my new status." She finished, "When he knew I was ready, he requested that I take on

more leadership of the college as a way of getting me back on track." Another vice president stated that she depended on the help of her colleagues to get over her disappointment when she was not selected to be president of her community college. "I depended on professional and personal friendships, but I was touched when the members of the presidential search committee shared their disappointment that I didn't get the presidency."

Another vice president told the story of how she had been encouraged by her president to apply for a vice presidency as an internal candidate after getting her doctorate, and how disappointed she felt when she was not chosen. She stated, "Losing the vice-presidency was a setback because I didn't understand why I didn't get the job, and no one could or would explain to me that the decision to hire someone else was a political one" She continued, "I used my family, friends, and colleagues to get through the setback. People at the college reinforced that not being hired didn't have anything to do with my strengths or weaknesses."

Knowing When to Lead and When to Follow: Emotional Intelligence

Emotional intelligence as defined by Goleman (1995, p. 81) played a large role in helping the respondents in the interview successfully move through their career detours/barriers. Gardner (1993) describes emotional intelligence as two forms of personal intelligence. One of the forms is interpersonal intelligence or "the ability to understand other people: what motivates them, how they work, how to work cooperatively with them" (p. 9). He calls the second emotional intelligence intrapersonal

intelligence. He explains, "Intrapersonal intelligence… is a correlative ability, turned inward. It is a capacity to form an accurate, veridical model of oneself and to be able to use that model to operate effectively in life" (p. 9).

Twelve of the 22 women interviewed displayed a positive attitude and an inner strength as they dealt with their career detours. For instance, one respondent relied on her interpersonal intelligence to get her through several career detours. She said, "I had a strong sense of who I am as a person—a strong sense of self-confidence. I knew where I wanted to be in five years, and I knew what I needed to do to get there. I also knew there would be obstacles. I planned and planned some more for the unexpected." She continued, "I guess you could say that I had a life plan…but I also had a good attitude and was able to work effectively with others." After applying for the presidency of her college as an internal candidate and being rejected, one vice president analyzed her feelings, "I relied on my inner strength to survive the disappointment of not getting the position and the backlash of negative reactions to the fact that I applied for the position."

One aspect of emotional intelligence, according to Goleman, involves knowing the value of relationships with administrators, faculty, and staff (1995, p. 81). Eleven of the 22 women who were interviewed said that they realized the importance of recognizing and appreciating others after some kind of career detour. For example, one interviewee always considered herself to be task-oriented and gave little thought to feeling-based relationships. She remembered, "However, after my husband died, I realized that people really wanted me to tell them something about myself as a way to build trust. As a private and task-oriented person, it was difficult to open up, but I

decided that I would share enough with them to be 'human' or approachable." This

attitude let people feel free to talk to her as a supervisor.

On a slightly different note, one respondent exerted the effort to make friends

with the person who eventually got the position for which she had applied. She said,

"The person who got the job was one of the kindest, most genuine people that I have

worked with. I currently utilize some of his leadership strategies." Another respondent

summarized her concern for others, "You need to know when to be a leader and when to

become a follower. I try to give everyone a chance to lead, and I acknowledge those who

take the lead. My job is to help develop leaders within the organization."

After her return from a voluntary career detour, one respondent noted, "Even

though there are people who tend to use subterfuge for their own personal interests and

advancement, I try to recognize folks who have talent and to delegate to them as a way to

help them move forward with their careers." Another interviewee demonstrated empathy

toward her colleagues as a result of her career detour. She said, "I lead people more

successfully because of having lost a job earlier in my career."

As a result of her career detour caused by a divorce, another respondent added, "I

learned to lead with empathy and compassion. I learned that faculty, staff, and students

have issues just like mine. I learned to be helpful to people who are suffering"

Plans B and C: Flexibility

Flexibility manifested itself as part of interpersonal intelligence for the women

leaders who were interviewed. Nine of the women who participated in this interview felt

that flexibility was essential to make it through career detours. To cite one president, "Not all careers involve upward movement. Women shouldn't allow the community college's concept of upward movement to obsess us. Sometimes a lateral move or even a step back is satisfying. 'Moving on' in your career could mean up, down, or laterally." Another interviewee noted, "When events don't turn out the way that I expect, I have no choice but to persist toward that goal. The detour happens for a reason, and life unfolds, as it should. I applied for my current position twice. It took four years to materialize. My current job is better than I could have imagined."

Still another respondent stated, "I asked for lateral moves to explore learning and new areas of the college and to place myself in situations to better serve students and colleagues….I changed locations, changed units, and eventually held 13 different positions at the same college." Yet another respondent commented, "Everyone can learn new things. In fact, the more hats you wear, the better contribution you can make to your college. I took advantage of opportunities as they came up." She continued, "The more roles I could take on, the better. My career went from being a part-time instructor to vice president in another institution before taking my current position." Another respondent summed up her thoughts on flexibility, "I really didn't have a life plan. I knew something would come up, and I would apply, and I would get a new job with new challenges."

Another interviewee's comments demonstrated having to turn down the perfect job because her husband could not find work in the same geographic area. She noted, "Success depends on how well you handle Plan B. I had to figure our how to make my current position more satisfying, so I opened myself to the idea of accepting opportunity

when it presented itself." She concluded, "I developed a mindset that was open to new opportunity. I decided that my personal happiness did not always depend on completing Plan A."

Others Who Have Dealt With the Same Situation: Mentoring

Mentoring was an important source of support for career detours for nine of the 22 women interviewed. Several women in the interview remembered college administrators who took the time to mentor them as a means of support and who encouraged them to take part in national/state career-related organizations to provide opportunities for professional growth. "I was given the opportunity to do other assignments outside the college on a state-wide and national level. The president encouraged me and made it possible for me to make presentations at national conferences," noted one interviewee about her lateral career move. When asked what advice she would give to women in community college leadership positions who faced a career detour, one respondent immediately replied, "Continue to listen to other women—find a mentor" (see Appendix A, Question 8). Another respondent who gave the following advice to women who might be facing a career detour supported this theme. She counseled, "Surround yourself with good mentors and communicate honestly with them about want is going on and continue to have good discussions with these mentors. They can help you define [career] detours and provide advice on how to avoid this kind of detour again." After a career detour, a president in the survey suggested, "Get a strong

support system, and don't be afraid to reach out for help. Seek out mentors. Talk to others who have dealt with the same situations."

One president expressed the importance of mentoring others by speaking to women's groups. She stated, "Today, I share my experiences about when I could move up and when I couldn't move up the career ladder. For several years, I postponed applying for new positions that would have required a move because of my family—a handicapped son and my husband's job." She comments, "I share that it's okay not to move up the career ladder." Another president shared her experience about helping potential leaders by mentoring them. She noted, "When I see people who are potential leaders, I talk to them and tell them what they need to do to be successful." One of the vice presidents in the interview process mentors young women who are about to try to move up the career ladder. She explained, "I try to support young women on career tracks. I advice them to consider how supportive a new environment is when they consider pursuing and accepting a new position." Another president further underscored the idea: "I share my story with others because I believe that I have a responsibility to share and reach out to those who are struggling."

A Tolerant Environment: The Community College Culture

Eleven of the women interviewed felt that part of their resiliency was due to the fact that their careers were in the community college setting. One respondent explained her reasoning as follows: "Many of us [presidents] rose up through the ranks of instruction. Sixty percent of the students we teach are women. We see these women go to

college despite economic and social hardships and create successful lives for themselves." As a result of this type of exposure, the women leaders in the study felt that they could overcome just about any career detour/stall that came their way. Contributing to this tremendous resiliency may be the fact that seven of the 22 women interviewed felt that there were numerous opportunities for women to advance in community colleges because of impending retirements of current executive leaders. According to Shults (2001), "Forty-five percent of current [community college] presidents plan to retire by 2007" (p.1). One respondent said, "There are more opportunities for women leaders in community colleges in part because of the vast number of retirements. Also, minorities and women will take opportunities for leadership partly because of the diverse population of the community colleges."

Another respondent pointed out, "Community colleges are more forgiving than four-year colleges, and detours may not be as severe as at a four-year college or university….There seems to be more tolerance in community colleges." Seven other interviewees felt that there were multiple opportunities for women leaders in community colleges to get back on their career track after a detour or roadblock. They felt that women in higher education were not put under the microscope as much as women executives in the corporate sector.

Table 4.2 summarizes the attributes that contribute to the resiliency of women leaders in community colleges.

Table 4.2: Resiliency Among Women in Executive Leadership in Community Colleges: Themes Developed from Oral Interview Responses

Theme	Attribute
Support by Family and Colleagues	Relied on support of family and friends Supported by community college administration Depended on support of professional colleagues
Emotional Intelligence	Strengthened existing internal and external relationships Learned about themselves with every missed opportunity Recognized others for their leadership abilities Maintained a positive attitude
Flexibility	Took lateral moves as a way to learn more Participated in professional activities outside of college Considered career detours/barriers as temporary
Mentoring	Needed a mentor Mentored others Realized the importance of leading by example
Openness of Community College to Advancement of Women	Took advantage of retirements Looked for opportunities for women and minorities Inspired by students' success

Contrary to Fels' theory that women who experience a career detour have trouble regaining the momentum to fulfill their ambition, the women in leadership positions in community colleges displayed a sense of optimism and capability. Fels (2004) asserts:

> Creating an ambition is a fundamental part of forming your identity, and once that is done, you must learn the appropriate skills. Perhaps most important, you must have the motivation to pursue your ambition time and in the face of the inevitable obstacles. Such continued efforts require a belief that the goal is worth attaining and that you personally have the qualities required to attain it. (p. 73)

Lessons Learned

How did the women in the interviews respond to their career detours emotionally, cognitively, and behaviorally (see Appendix A, Question 3)? Several women leaders stated that after they got over the disappointment of a career stall, they rededicated themselves to their work and found pleasure and satisfaction in their current positions. They looked for ways to make these positions more interesting and challenging. In fact, the word "learn" was used 26 times by respondents to indicate that they continued to educate themselves as a means of staying challenged and interested in their current positions.

One respondent did not seem to learn anything from her career detour. Earlier in her career, she did not receive the same raise that her colleagues received and was angry as a result. She stated that she continued to work for the supervisor who did not give her the raise "just to spite him and be a thorn in his side." Her interview responses did not contain the seeds of optimism displayed by the other respondents.

Work and Life Balance

Finding the right balance between family, personal health, and career was just as difficult for the women who were surveyed as for women in the corporate sector. Maintaining a good life balance was a lesson learned through career stalls by some women in this study (see Appendix A, Question 7). Nine of the 22 interviewees mentioned the importance of life balance. They advised aspiring vice presidents and presidents to know what they are willing to sacrifice from a personal standpoint. One of

the vice presidents who participated in the survey stated, "I used to be tired when I got home from work, but now I'm getting stronger because I began a walking program. Now I seem to have more energy after work. I'm taking care of my body now!"

After getting over the shock of the death of her son and a professional career detour, another vice president noted, "I have more balance in my life now. Balance is important for leaders because the job is not the only part of my life. I even go to retreats where I get new ideas and get energized." One of the presidents agreed that balance is an important issue. She said, "I know I need balance in my life. People are fragile and there's more to life than just a career. Balance seems to be the biggest concern in today's society."

A vice president who responded to the interview noted how important it was to balance family and career. She reflected, "You have to make choices that will work well for your family and your own work situation. You family needs your time." Another vice president described herself as presently being in a career holding pattern. She responded, "I'm in a waiting period enjoying my personal life right now. My personal responsibilities have changed because I remarried and now have a husband and two stepchildren in my life. I now put my priorities in a different order. My marriage comes first."

Disappointments

The women in the study quickly learned the importance of developing a "thick skin" after a career detour/barrier. In other words, they had to learn to not to generalize

the problem or take rejection too personally (see Appendix A, Question 5). They had to

learn the importance of getting over disappointments quickly and publicly. In fact, one

respondent indicated that she developed a thick skin to protect herself because of her

career setback. She indicated, "As a result of a difficult career detour, I maintain a

personal distance between myself and colleagues at the college. From an emotional

standpoint, I'm a little removed from my work. I'm really more protective of myself."

Integrity

Integrity was an important element to the women in the interviews. One

respondent stated that she was responsible for her actions, and she did not try to pass the

blame on to others in her administration. Other respondents felt that they were role

models and needed set the bar for good behavior. One respondent counseled, "I do not

expect anyone to do something that I would not do myself." Several respondents warned

that having hidden agendas was deadly to success in community college leadership. In

summary, integrity for the respondents to the interview questions was knowing their core

values and staying true to them (see Appendix A, Question 6).

Perceptions of Leadership Opportunities for Women in K-12 and the Corporate Sector

One clear consensus came from the women's responses to questions about

leadership and women in the corporate sector and in the elementary/secondary setting

(see Appendix A, Question 9). They felt that leadership positions in these settings were

still held by a majority of men, although opportunities for advancement into were beginning to open up for women.

The women in the interview felt that men were more conditioned to career setbacks than women, or else they were taught to mask their feelings more than women. The women observed that men seemed not to take setbacks as seriously as women. In community colleges, when men experienced a career barrier, they were able to move to another community college while women tended to be tied to one location and could not move as easily as men.

Adding to the idea of great resilience was the view that career detours, or "stalls" as the women in the survey liked to call them, were temporary. After a career stall, each took the time to evaluate the event objectively. From a career standpoint, thoughtful and objective evaluation brought about change that included becoming better listeners, better time managers, and more sensitive to those around them. From a personal standpoint, changes included taking more time for family and self, being grateful, learning to be at peace with one' current career, knowing when to pull back when the job becomes obsessive, and realizing that all decisions have a ripple effect beyond the present moment on family and career (see Appendix A, Question 7).

Observations from Phase I of this study indicate that women in executive leadership positions in community colleges experience the same emotions as women in the corporate sector when they go through a career setback. However, they seem to process the event more quickly and maintain a more positive attitude toward continuing to pursue their career goals. Information in Phase I indicates that women in community

college leadership feel that there are more opportunities available to them even after a career setback.

Even a lateral move was not a negative experience for these women. They often had a background in teaching, which gave them the ability to change curriculum, teaching styles, and methods as needed. As a result, they had a great deal of autonomy and flexibility in their earlier careers and were able to look at lateral moves as beneficial, exciting, and challenging. In their teaching careers, especially in community colleges, they taught a student population in which the majority of students were women, and as they encouraged those students to have a positive attitude, pursue a career, and continue to invest in their education, they were sharing their own philosophy.

<center>Phase II: Survey</center>

Once the trends and attributes were identified, a national survey was developed and sent to 248 women in community colleges who were identified as either vice presidents or presidents.

Phase II of the research used a 31-item multiple choice survey instrument to determine if the findings from the interviews held true for a larger sample of women leaders in community colleges. Surveys were distributed nationally throughout the United States through e-mail. An accompanying message explained the purpose of the survey and its usefulness to future women administrators in community colleges. The message also assured the respondents of confidentiality (see Appendix B).

Demographics

Eighty-five women in executive leadership in community colleges responded to the survey. The response rate was 34 percent. Table 4.3 shows the geographic distribution of responses to the survey.

Table 4.3: Distribution of Survey Respondents by Geographic Location

Area of United States	Number of Responses
Northeast (ME, NH, VT, MA, CT, RI, NY, PA. NJ)	6
Southeast (FL, GA, NC, SC, VA, DE, MD, DC)	29
Midwest (IL, MI, IN, OH, MN, WI, KS, MO, IA)	25
South (TN, MS, LA, KY, AL, WV, AR, OK, TX)	15
Northwest (AK, OR, WA, ID)	2
West (NV, CO, MT, UT, WY)	3
Southwest (CA, NM, AZ, HI)	5
Total	85

The respondents were asked if they were first-, second-, or third-generation college graduates. First-generation college graduates composed 67.5 percent of the respondents; 25.3 percent of the respondents were second-generation college graduates, and 7.2 percent were third-generation college graduates.

Fifty-two percent of the respondents had been in their leadership positions for 1-5 years. Thirty-seven percent had been in executive positions for 6-10 years, and 24 percent had been in community college leadership for 11 or more years. Almost 66 percent of the respondents indicated that they advanced to leadership positions from instruction. Twenty-nine percent came from student services, and almost 25 percent came from administrative services. Other backgrounds included the corporate sector, not-for

profits, development, human resources, research, research and planning, and public school administration. One respondent served for 10 years as secretary to the president and board of a community college before taking on leadership responsibilities.

Fifty-six percent of the women surveyed stated that they decided to become a community college vice president/vice president while holding a mid-level administrative position at a community college. Another 12 percent stated that they decided on executive leadership careers while serving as community college instructors. One respondent wrote, "As an instructor at a four-year university, I realized that my prior leadership abilities were not being utilized. When an opening became available in the community college, I was prepared to pursue it." Four of the respondents entered community administration from the K-12 educational setting. Several of the presidents and vice presidents surveyed did not come from educational backgrounds. Six percent entered community college executive administration through their roles in not-for-profit organizations. Two percent came to community college executive leadership from the corporate sector. A total of six percent of the vice presidents and presidents decided to pursue executive leadership while they were graduate or undergraduate students.

Respondents' ages ranged from 30-69. Sixty-four percent of the respondents were between the ages of 50-59. Twenty-seven percent were between the ages of 60-69 making a total of 91 percent who were over 50 years old. Looking at nationality, the majority of the respondents were white, non-Hispanic. Specifically, 73 were white; seven were black; two were Asian; two were Native American or American Indian, and one was Hispanic.

Phase II: Data Analysis

Inferential statistics were used to compare the differences between the variables. Basically, chi-square was used to see if the data fit an assumed frequency model. The chi-square test is defined as follows:

> [It] measures how independent the two variables are and asks if what you [observed] is significantly different from what you would have expected to get by chance alone. The calculation looks at each cell and measures the difference between the actual frequency you got and the frequency that you would have expected by chance. (Nardi, 2003, p. 144)

"Chi-square tells us whether two variables are associated" (Nardi, 2003, p. 152).

This test was used on responses to pairs of questions, and the goal was to determine if the distribution of these paired responses could be explained by chance alone. In this study, all chi-square tests were carried out with one degree of freedom and a significance level of 0.10 (90 percent confidence).

For all such tests the following general hypotheses were used:

- Null: The pattern of answers to the two questions under consideration could be explained through a bivariate binominal distribution, using probabilities based on the fraction of "yes" answers to each question.

- Alternative: The pattern of answers showed some degree of dependence that could not be explained by the above distribution. Whether this dependence was positive (both "no" or both "yes") or negative (one "no" and one "yes") would be determined through inspection of the data.

To investigate the effect of age and experience on women's perceptions regarding career detours, the response data were analyzed using a series of t-tests on the proportion of "yes" answers. Responses were broken up into three levels for each category (age and experience), and independent-sampling test procedures were used on each pair of sample proportions. This method was used instead of an analysis of variance because the sizes of the samples were markedly different from each other. In addition, a chi-square test was not used because some of the sample sizes were small enough to make the results unreliable.

The following general hypotheses were used for the t-tests, considering two age/experience groups at a time:

- Null: The proportions of "yes" answers did not differ significantly between groups.

- Alternative: The proportions of "yes" answers did differ significantly.

The null hypothesis in each case was that the two proportions being compared were equal; the alternative hypothesis was that they were different, meaning that the two groups held different attitudes concerning the question of interest. This particular approach required the use of a two-tailed t-test.

A significance level of 0.10 was used for all tests, and the degrees of freedom depended on the number of data points in each sample. This level was chosen instead of the customary 0.05 due to limitations imposed by small sample sizes. A preliminary estimate of 95 percent confidence intervals for proportions of "yes" responses yielded a

number of cases in which the interval boundaries fell above 1 or below 0 (both physically impossible). Therefore, the simplest remedy was to narrow the confidence limits.

For the above analysis, the age data were broken into three groups as follows: 30-39 and 40-49 together, 50-59, and 60-69. This was done because only one respondent fell into the 30-39 age group. The three levels of experience specified in Question 6 (0-5 years, 6-10 years, 11+ years) were used as given, since the numbers of respondents in those three groups were not as unequal as in the age calculations.

<center>Phase II: Background</center>

Fels (2004) looks at the similarities between the ambitions of boys and girls:

> Looking through developmental studies of both boys and girls, I noticed that they virtually always identified the same two components of childhood ambition. There was a…practicable plan that involved a real accomplishment requiring work and skill. And then there was an expectation of approval: fame, status, acclaim, praise, [and/or] honor. (p. 6)

Respondents to the study most frequently gave teaching as the career they dreamed about as a child. A career in the health field—nurse or doctor—was the next most frequent response, and going into business was the third most chosen career. Fels (2004) explains why so many women dreamed of being teachers. She argues, "The mandates of femininity make it clear that certain occupations are more hospitable to women and more socially acceptable….Any 'serving ' profession will create minimal strain on culturally defined femininity, especially if the person being served is a man or child" (p. 37).

When asked if they dreamed recognition associated with their careers, 64 percent of the respondents answered in the affirmative. Fels (2004) states, "And there is no evidence to date that the intensity of this motivation [for recognition] differs between girls and boys, women and men" (p. 7). As children, and especially as women, the respondents in the study dreamed of careers that were not threatening to men, but at the same time, they dreamed of recognition with the same intensity as boys. Other choices for careers among the women in the survey included actress, artist, attorney, secretary, cowgirl, rock singer, model, interpreter, and racecar driver.

Causal Factors for Career Detours

The women in community college leadership faced some of the same career detours as their counterparts in the corporate sector. They experienced the pull factors: family, personal health, and elder care among others. In addition, they experienced the push factors: organizational politics, gender issues, and the need for an advanced degree.

Putting Everything on Hold: Family and Personal Health Issues

The first research question for this study asks what situations appear to pull women in community college leadership from their career paths. Interestingly, while women in the corporate sector felt that family issues pulled them off their career tracks, the women who responded to the survey did not feel the same way. Fifty-six percent listed childbirth as a reason for taking some time off from work, but no longer than four months, and their jobs remained secure during their time with their newborns. There was

one exception to this situation. One respondent quit her job for two years to stay home with her babies/toddlers, but during that time, she completed a master's degree.

The first research question for this study focuses on the factors that have the capability of causing career detours. The interview respondents frequently cited family-related issues and personal health as causes for them to take time off from their careers. However, only eight percent of the survey respondents noted that personal health issues temporarily interrupted their climb to community college executive leadership. A few women were temporarily diverted by elder care, death of a spouse, divorce, or husband's career/business but not for any significant amount of time. For instance, one respondent related that she and her sister cared for their father who had several strokes. He alternated living with each daughter for six months at a time. The respondent stated that she did not take time off from her job to care for her father; she just altered her schedule by rushing home at noon to prepare her father's lunch and hurrying home right after work. In her words, "I did not put in the many extra hours that I usually did."

Considering the mixed responses about family related issues, especially elder care, a chi-square test was conducted on questions 10G, that asked if respondents took time off from their careers to care for elderly parents or other family members, and 11E, that asked if respondents had postponed moving to take a new position because of elder care issues. The test gave a p-value of 0.897, so that the null hypothesis was not rejected at a significance level of 0.10; thus, the two issues had little effect on one another in terms of career impact. The relative frequencies of negative responses do suggest that

elder care issues were not an important factor in career detours for the women surveyed

(see Table 4.4).

Table 4.4: Chi-square Test Results for Questions 10G and 11E

Question 10G: Did you ever take time out emotionally or physically from your career to deal with elder care?
Question 11E: Have you ever postponed moving to a different geographic location to take a new position because your elderly parents needed your care?

		OBSERVED			EXPECTED	
	Q11E	Yes	No	Total	Yes	No
Q10G						
Yes		65	14	79	64.89286	14.10714
No		4	1	5	4.107143	0.892857
Total		69	15	84		

df = 1
chi-square = 0.016643
p-value = 0.897352

Continuing to address the issues that are thought of as causes for career detours, the issues of the women's age and elder care were explored. Is elder care more of a career detour for older women than younger ones? A comparison of "yes" answers among age groups for Question 11E revealed a definite trend. At the 0.10 significance level, the null hypothesis could be rejected for comparisons between the 30-49 and 60-69 groups, and between the 50-59 and 60-69 groups. Based on the increase in "yes" answers, the older groups have probably reached the point in their lives in which they are facing the issue of elder care. Obviously, elder care is not yet an issue for the younger group (see Table 4.5).

Table 4.5: Comparison Test by Age Group for Question 11E

Question 11E: Have you postponed moving to a different geographic location to take a new position because of elderly parents who needed your care?

Age group	Proportion Yes Q11E	N	Comparison	t-score	DF	p-value (2-tail)
30-49 (1/2)	0.142857	7	1/2 and 3	-0.57944	59	0.564499
50-59 (3)	0.240741	54	1/2 and 4	-2.9043	26	0.007415
60-69 (4)	0.761905	21	3 and 4	-4.16134	73	8.54E-05

The survey continued to explore the pull of family on the respondents' ambition to move ahead in their careers. One area explored dealt with postponing a new career step by refusing to move to a new geographic location.

Through the lens of the first research question family related issues and personal health were interrupters to the climb to success. One of those issues was taking a new position that required a physical move to another town or state. Only 19 percent of the survey respondents reported they postponed moving to take a promotion because they did not want to move young children (Question 11A).

Another example of family-related incidents that might cause a career detour for the women surveyed was the careers of their spouses. Almost 23 percent of the respondents turned down career advancement because their husbands did not want to move. Surprisingly, many of the respondents turned down a promotion when it required relocating to another town or state because they did not want to move, or they wanted to stay near their families. One respondent noted that her husband's career was not more important; she turned down the advancement because her husband earned more money.

Opening Closed Doors: Need for an Advanced Degree

In response to the second research question that asked women in executive leadership at community colleges to look at their perceptions of intervening factors that diverted, reshaped, or undermined their career plans, a lack of an advanced degree— either a Ph.D. or Ed.D.—was listed as a career detour by the respondents in Phase I. Phase II revealed that in order to get their doctorates 75 percent of the respondents worked full time and went to graduate school on a part time basis. One respondent stated, "I worked full time, attended face-to-face classes full time, commuted, raised a daughter as a single parent, and had only a semester's leave." Another respondent noted, "My husband went [to graduate school] full-time, and I supported the family. I went part-time and continued to work full time—we both have doctorates and are both in education. There were different expectations because of traditional roles." Yet, another respondent related, "I wrote my dissertation while employed full time as a single mother with a four-year old….I had no support. It took me seven years to finish the dissertation, but I did it!"

Push Factors: Organizational Politics

The second research question asked for perceptions of incidents or factors that caused a career detour for women leaders in community colleges. The survey looked at ways in which the respondents were pushed away from the pursuit of career goals and the fulfillment of their ambition. Sixty-eight percent of the women in the survey listed had interviewed for an external position and had been turned down at some point in their

careers. Another 37 percent had turned down an external position because it was "not the right fit." Still another 36 percent had interviewed for an internal position as a way to move up the career ladder but had not been selected. Thirty-one percent of the respondents made a lateral move as a holding pattern for the fulfillment of their career goals.

The second research question asked the women what kinds of events/issues seemed to be pulling them away from their career goals. They responded that their college organizations were pushing them away from their career fulfillment. For example, 51 percent of the respondents cited the perception that a woman could not do the job as a barrier to their advancement. One respondent noted, "At our college the perception issues that a woman can't do specific jobs tend to be with our board of trustees." Another respondent noted gender issues as a problem. She said, "I work with four men on Cabinet, and I find I am often not listened to—I will present an idea and have it glossed over and then accepted when presented by a man." Twenty-nine percent cited their failure to completely understand the informal power structure within their colleges as a reason they had to face a career detour. Twenty-six percent of the respondents perceived a lack of internal support from colleagues or supervisors or administrators as a roadblock to promotion.

Following up on the issue of organizational politics, the respondents to the survey were asked if they perceived that other women in executive leadership positions did not always support them (Question 26C). Question 17F asked if the respondents learned that people did not always have their best interests at heart. A chi-square test gave a p-value

of 0.040, leading to rejection of the null hypothesis and an apparent positive dependence

between respondents' answers to the two questions (see Table 4.6). These findings can be

considered as an outgrowth of the effect of campus politics. For instance, one woman

might support another one if doing so helped her to further her own ends.

Table 4.6: Chi-square Results for Questions 17F and 26C

Question 17F: People don't always have your best interests at heart.
Question 26C: Women in executive leadership in community colleges do not always support other women.

		OBSERVED				EXPECTED	
	Q26C	Yes	No	Total		Yes	No
Q17F							
Yes		26	24	50		21.42857	28.57143
No		10	24	34		14.57143	19.42857
Total		36	48	84			

df = 1
chi-square = 4.216471
p-value = 0.040033

Remnants of the "Good Ol' Boys" Network: Gender Issues

The idea of the women's perceptions of factors that caused career detours

continued to be explored w the presidents and vice presidents were asked how they felt

they handled their career detours compared to the same issues faced by men. Sixty-six

percent or the respondents felt gender was still an issue because a majority of community

college leadership positions are still held by men. In addition, 57 percent felt that women

in executive leadership positions in community colleges do not always support other

women and their ambitions. Also, 61 percent believed that women leaders in community

colleges seem to be watched more closely than men in the same positions. Sixty percent

of the respondents to the survey noted that often men have more freedom than women in

the same leadership position to move from one community college to another to offset a career detour/stall.

The respondents continued to share their perception that gender was still a factor in their career detours in response to the second research question about perceptions of causal factors for career detours. Question 25 asked if women in executive leadership in community colleges perceived that men in the same leadership roles had fewer career detours/stalls than women. Question 26D asked if women perceived that community college administrators were more forgiving of men than of women when it came to dealing with career detours/stalls (see Table 4.7).

Table 4.7: Chi-square Results for Questions 25 and 26D

Question 25: Do you agree or disagree that many women in community college leadership positions perceive that men in the same leadership roles do not seem to have as many career detours as women?

Question 26D: Are community college administrators more forgiving of men than women when it comes to weathering career detours/stalls?

		OBSERVED				EXPECTED	
	Q26D	Yes	No	Total		Yes	No
Q25							
Yes		11	4	15		8.4375	6.5625
No		34	31	65		36.5625	28.4375
Total		45	35	80			

df = 1
chi-square = 2.189337
p-value = 0.138969

A chi-square analysis performed on the available responses led to a p-value of 0.139, so that the null hypothesis was not rejected and that there was no significant dependence of one answer on the other. However, it should be noted that four of the respondents did not answer Question 25 at all. The calculated chi-square value for this

test is already close to the critical value (2.189 versus 2.706); if the missing respondents had answered both questions the same way, the dependence between questions could easily have become significant. Attitudes about traditional gender roles can help explain these results.

Women are relatively new to community college executive leadership, and as a result, they feel that they are operating outside the network of contacts that has been established by their male predecessors. As recent arrivals, they perceive themselves as being under stricter scrutiny than their male counterparts. Furthermore, their well-connected male colleagues are able to rely on the established network to find a quick way through career stalls/detours—an advantage not as readily available to women.

When asked if they perceived that community college administrators were more forgiving of men than women when assessing career detours, a majority of the survey respondents answered in the affirmative. When asked if they perceived that women leaders in community colleges seemed to be under the microscope more than men in the same positions, slightly fewer than half answered in the affirmative.

People with strong connections in their field tend to have an easier time surviving adverse situations that might result in more severe consequences for those with less experience. At the same time, the connected person can easily find a way to re-enter or continue in the field if circumstances have forced him/her out of it. Since men have been involved with community college administration longer than women, they have had a much better chance to build up strong networks that can bring them through career stalls/detours.

One of the respondents commented on society's view of men who must take care of a family member because of illness or some other related issue. "They [men] have fewer stalls as their role in caring for a family member—child or parent—is not seen [by society] as overshadowing their career expectations." After commenting that she thought the playing field had been leveled for men and women in the community college environment, she talked about the support men get from their wives. "Probably the biggest difference is marital status—successful men tend to have wives, and successful women tend to be single. Men have support that women don't, and if women are married, they are giving rather than receiving martial support." These comments back up the idea that society still expects women to be caregivers.

Sources of Support

The third research question asks how women leaders in community colleges respond emotionally, cognitively, and behaviorally to interruptions/detours in their career plans. After respondents faced a career detour, they found support in a variety of resources, both internal and external. Internal resources included emotional endurance and attitude, while external resources included family, colleagues, networks, outside interests such as hobbies, and religious faith/spiritualism.

Family and Colleagues

As predicted by the interview responses, a majority of the survey respondents related that their families provided support as they went through a career detour. Sixty-

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one percent of these women said that family was a source of emotional support as they worked through their career detours. One respondent simply said that she married the right man.

A chi-square test was performed on question 13C that asked if family/friends helped the respondents quickly get back on track after a career detour, and question 15C that asked if family helped them get through a stalled time in their professional life (see Table 4.8). The test results revealed a p-value that was virtually zero; hence, the null hypothesis was rejected and there was a dependence between responses to these two questions. In this case, the relation appears to be a positive one, suggesting that support from family plays a key role throughout the entire process of recovering from a career detour.

Table 4.8: Chi-square Results for Questions 13C and 15C

Question: 13C: After a career detour, did the support of family and friends help you get back on track quickly?

Question 15C: Did the support of your family ever help you get over a stalled time in your professional life?

		OBSERVED			EXPECTED	
	Q15C	Yes	No	Total	Yes	No
Q13C						
Yes		29	11	40	15.71429	24.28571
No		4	40	44	17.28571	26.71429
Total		33	51	84		

df = 1
chi-square = 35.3192
p-value = 2.8E-09

Twenty-six percent of the respondents to the survey noted that an additional source of support came from colleagues. Gallagher (2000) explains this small reliance on professional colleagues: "The level of intimacy you share with others when you are

moving up in your career may diminish once you attain more senior levels" (p. 87). She

continues, "Sharing with your peers some personal information and the challenges you

face can be very healthy; however, the lesson to be learned from executive women is to

be selective in the information you disclose" (p. 89). One respondent stated that she relied

especially on one close woman friend. "We went to graduate school together. We both

were married and had children and both waited until [our] children were grown to begin

to consider presidencies."

A chi-square test was performed on questions 13D which asked if professional

colleagues helped the women presidents and vice presidents get back on their career

tracks after a career stall, and question 15D which asked if support from college faculty

and staff was instrumental in helping the respondents make it through the time involved

in their career stalls. The resulting p-value of 0.0002 meant that the null hypothesis could

be rejected at the 0.10 significance level. The data indicate that professional support plays

an appreciable role in both phases of weathering a career stall (see Table 4.9).

Table 4.9: Chi-square Results for Questions 13D and 15D

Question 13D: After a career detour did the support of your colleagues at work help you get back on track
quickly?
Question 15D: Did the support of your college's faculty and staff help you get over a stalled time in your
professional life?

| | | OBSERVED | | | | EXPECTED | |
	Q15D	Yes	No	Total		Yes	No
Q13D							
Yes		47	7	54		39.85714	14.14286
No		15	15	30		22.14286	7.857143
Total		62	22	84			

df = 1
chi-square = 13.68524
p-value = 0.000216

Still other respondents to the survey said that during their career detours they connected/reconnected with professional networks for support. Twenty-nine percent of the respondents began earnestly developing national networks.

Emotional Intelligence/Emotional Endurance

The third research question explored how women responded emotionally, cognitively, and behaviorally to their career detours. Sixty-seven percent of the survey respondents relied on their personal inner strength to help them get over a career setback. Question 15F asked the respondents if such strength helped them make it through their actual career detour. Question 13B asked if internal strength helped them feel they could continue to pursue their career goals despite the career detour. A chi-square test gave a p-value of virtually zero, leading to the rejection of the null hypothesis and an apparent positive dependence between the respondents' answers to the two questions. The results of this test suggest that this type of strength is an important factor in both weathering the career stall and getting back on course (see Table 4.10).

Table 4.10: Chi-square Results for Questions 13B and 15F

Question 13B: After a career detour did you rely on your inner strength to get back on track quickly?
Question 15F: Did your personal inner strength help you get over a stalled time in your professional career?

		OBSERVED				EXPECTED	
	Q15F	Yes	No	Total		Yes	No
Q13B							
Yes		19	10	29		9.666667	19.33333
No		9	46	55		18.33333	36.66667
Total		28	56	84			

df = 1
chi-square = 20.64451
p-value = 5.53E-6

In response to the research question that explored how women dealt with interruptions to their career plans, age seemed to be as asset in dealing with the emotions, disappointments, and blows to self-esteem that went along with career detours and stalls. When the responses to Question 13B were broken down by experience level, a t-test on the proportions of "yes" answers yielded an interesting result. Although the p-values for all three tests do not allow rejection of the null hypothesis (that any proportion is different from the others), an increase from 6-10 years to 11+ years appeared that was very nearly statistically significant at the 0.10 level (see Table 4.11). This kind of self-reliance is an attribute that takes time to develop to the point where a woman can call on it to help her over a challenging time in her career.

Table 4.11: Comparison Test by Experience Group for Question 13B

Question 13B: After a career detour, was your inner strength an internal resource to help get you back on your career path quickly?

Exp group	Proportion Yes Q13B	N	Comparison	t-score	DF	p-value (2-tail)
1-5 yr (1)	0.684211	38	1 and 2	1.229126	64	0.223525
6-10 yr (2)	0.535714	28	1 and 3	-0.72386	54	0.472275
11+ yr (3)	0.777778	18	2 and 3	-1.65997	44	0.104032

Not surprisingly, 69 percent of the respondents stated that a good attitude helped them through a career setback. Gallagher (2000) remarks, "In your career climb, you're not always going to get a 'yes.' You need to be emotionally strong enough to be able to endure the ups and downs, the wins and losses that occur with every project, every decision. To be able to cut your losses early is important" (p. 59).

Following are remarks by several of the respondents describing their attitude toward life in general and work specifically:

- "Do what you need to do. Get the degree, build relationships, work hard, be politically astute, and make sure others can trust you. And if it doesn't happen where you are, be prepared to move."

- "I'm an optimist, and I think that's really important for someone who aspires to community college leadership."

- "Just do your best—always—nothing more and nothing less."

- "Never stop learning—about yourself, students, the college and the community you serve. Always be a builder and developer—of yourself, your students, your staff, your college and the community you ser

- "Sacrifices are not only temporary—they are worth it!"

- "We always make the best decisions that we are capable of making at that time and place."

In dealing with their career detours, the women in this study exhibited flexibility. Ruderman and Ohlott (2002) describe women with flexibility as "having developed a wide repertoire of skills that allowed them to respond appropriately in stressful or novel situations, and they could envision a variety of possibilities and generate alternative prospective outcomes (pp. 91-92). The authors finish, "Despite having plans and goals, they realized that the path to each goal was not necessarily linear, and they often made adjustments along the way" (p. 92). The authors continue, "For example, when stymied

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in the quest for a promotion, it may be tempting to complain—but more useful to sidestep and seek out another opportunity" (2002, p. 92).

For example, 77 percent of the respondents noted that they would recommend taking on additional roles in order to learn how the college works and to expand their own capabilities. Sixty-eight percent noted that they had to learn to be flexible both personally and professionally. One respondent advised women who wanted to move into community college leadership roles to "be flexible and open to new, unexpected opportunities."

Yet another way the women in the survey dealt with their career detours was a good positive attitude—part of emotional intelligence. The presidents and vice presidents who responded to the survey displayed attitudes of commitment, control, and challenge. Kouzes and Posner (2002) consider these characteristics to be the sign of a hardy attitude—a positive way of looking at life and going forward despite temporary roadblocks (p. 221).

Kouzes and Posner (2002) also refer to a positive outlook as psychological hardiness, saying, "No one will follow someone who avoids stressful events and won't take decisive action." (p. 222). Fifty-four percent of the women who responded to the survey stated their belief that they would find a light at the end of the tunnel. In other words, they felt that they were survivors and could cope with adversity. Fifty-two percent of the respondents stated their belief that time takes care of many things. They learned that with patience many of life's issues and workplace related issues work themselves out in a satisfactory solution for all stakeholders. Forty-nine percent noted that sometimes

professional goals need to be abandoned or readjusted. These responses demonstrated

that flexibility was at the core of the resilience for these women presidents and vice

presidents in community college settings.

Question 13A asked how the respondents were able to get back on course quickly

after a career detour, while question 31D asked them to describe their attitude toward life

in general. The chi-square test on these two sets of responses produced a p-value of 1,

meaning that the null hypothesis could not be rejected. There is thus no evidence to

support a connection between having a fallback option and the admission that sometimes

goals needed to be abandoned or changed in order for women in community college

leadership to be successful (see Table 4.12).

Table 4.12: Chi-square Results for Questions 13A and 31D

Question 13A: Did having a plan A and even perhaps a plan B help you cope with your career detour?
Question 31D: Would you describe you attitude toward life in general as continually looking for something
new rather than some place that's new?

		OBSERVED				EXPECTED	
	Q31D	Yes	No	Total		Yes	No
Q13A							
Yes		27	27	54		27	27
No		15	15	30		15	15
Total		42	42	84			

df = 1
chi-square = 9.35E-31
p-value = 1

A comparison among the experience groups showed no differences in response

rates to 13A that would pass a t-test at the 0.10 significance level, and the null hypothesis

could not be rejected for any pair of sample proportions. However, the drop in responses

from 1-5 years to 6-10 years shows the beginnings of a trend for women at that stage of

their careers to start thinking about options (see Table 4.13).

Table 4.13: Comparison Test by Experience Group for Question 13A

Question 13A: Did having an alternative plan A or even plan B help you get back on track professionally
after a planned or unplanned career detour?

Exp group	Proportion Yes Q13A	N	Comparison	t-score	DF	p-value (2-tail)
1-5 yr (1)	0.421053	38	1 and 2	1.441366	64	0.154356
6-10 yr (2)	0.25	28	1 and 3	0.22849	54	0.820128
11+ yr (3)	0.388889	18	2 and 3	-0.99913	44	0.323194

From the chi-square results in Table 4.12, it can be seen that two different kinds

of flexibility are at work in women leaders' career plans. Devising a new course of action

to reach the same goal is a different process from that of readjusting the goal itself. The t-

test results indicate that the first type of flexibility can decline somewhat as a woman

spends more time in the same position, leading to a single-track mindset in terms of

getting ahead in her professional life.

Some of the respondents wrote about consciously seeking out activities to help

them move beyond their career detours. For instance, they mentioned looking beyond

their professional lives and refocusing some of their energies on their communities.

Mentoring

Mentoring seemed like a good way to deal with a career detour behaviorally.

According to McCauley and Douglas (2004), "A mentoring relationship is typically

defined as a committed, long-term relationship in which a senior person [mentor] supports the personal and professional development of a junior person [protégé]" (p. 92). Gersick and Kram (2002) give another definition of a mentor:

> Research on mentoring suggests that this developmental process can take two forms: instrumental help with career skills and advancement, and psychosocial support with more intimate issues of identity, confidence, and aspirations. The ideal mentor integrates both forms of assistance. However, in most cases, individuals must piece together the help they receive from multiple sources. (p. 14)

Two questions on the survey asked about the value of mentoring for the respondents who were highly educated women in executive leadership positions in community colleges across the country. Interestingly, 29.8 percent stated that finding a good mentor was important in helping them move beyond their temporary career detour, and 33.3 percent of the respondents stated that they relied on a mentor to move through their career detours.

This finding supports the theory that as women move up the career ladder to positions of higher and higher authority, their level of intimacy with others tends to decrease (Gallagher, 2000, p. 87). The women who responded to the survey tended to rely on family and friends for support rather than on a mentor; however, a recurring theme was that mentoring others was important to these women. They wanted to share their experiences with emerging leaders to help them be successful.

An example of the willingness of women leaders to share their experiences, while at the same time exhibiting thoughtful consideration about what information to share and with whom is found in the results from the chi-square test performed on Question 14A

and Question 17B. Question 14A asked if the respondents shared their experiences related with career stalls with other women who wanted to move up the career ladder, and Question 17B asked if one of the lessons learned from a career detour was that careful thought should be given as to what information is shared with others. The chi-square test gave a p-value of 0.0386, leading to the rejection of the null hypothesis and an apparent positive dependence between answers to the two questions. A reasonable conclusion to be drawn is that women who do decide to share their experiences have already given careful thought to what and how much they will share with other women (see Table 4.14).

Table 4.14: Chi-square Results for Questions 14A and 17B

Question 14A: Did you consciously share your experiences with other women who wanted move up the career ladder as a way to restart your career after experiencing a career detour?
Question 17B: Did you consciously give careful thought to what information you should share with others after experiencing a career detour?

		OBSERVED			EXPECTED	
	Q17B	Yes	No	Total	Yes	No
Q14A						
Yes		51	18	69	47.64286	21.35714
No		7	8	15	10.35714	4.642857
Total		58	26	84		

df = 1
chi-square = 4.279922
p-value = 0.038565

Question 14C asked respondents if they consciously sought a mentor as a way to restart their careers after a career stall. Question 15I asked them if a mentor was influential in helping them make it through their actual career stalls. A chi-square test revealed a p-value that was virtually zero, indicating that the null hypothesis was rejected at a significance level of 0.10. These results suggested that the women who were

surveyed felt that mentoring was an important component in both surviving a career

detour and in moving forward beyond that temporary delay (see Table 4.15).

Table 4.15: Chi-square Results for Questions 14C and 15I

Question 14C: As a way to restart you career after experiencing a career detour, did you consciously
           seek out a good mentor?
Question 15I: Did a mentor help you get over a stalled time in your professional life?

		OBSERVED				EXPECTED	
	Q15I	Yes	No	Total		Yes	No
Q14C							
Yes		54	5	59		39.33333	19.66667
No		2	23	25		16.66667	8.333333
Total		56	28	84			

df = 1
chi-square = 13.68524
p-value = 1.13E-13

Openness of Community College Culture

The openness of the community college culture was another asset in helping

women leaders cope emotionally, cognitively, and behaviorally with their career detours.

Sixty percent of the women who responded to the survey felt that women leaders were

accepted as leaders more readily in community colleges than they might be accepted at

four-year colleges and universities. There are two factors that help explain the receptivity

of community colleges to women leaders. "Dr. Martha T. Nesbitt, president of

Gainesville College in Gainesville, Georgia, said the relative newness of the community

colleges to the higher education system has …been a boon for women" (Lane, 2002 p. 5).

Lynn C. Coleman, vice president of administration and finance at Howard Community

College in Columbia, Maryland, adds, "And sometimes, because community colleges are

smaller than four-year schools, they give women more opportunities for leadership"
(Lane, 2002, p. 5).

Seventy-four percent of the respondents agreed with the statement: "The number
of women leaders in community college will continue to grow as current leaders get
ready to retire within the next five to seven years." Wallin (2006) notes, "The statistics
are familiar—the turnover in leadership in community colleges will be unprecedented in
the next decade as baby boomers retire. The leaders who were instrumental in the
development of community colleges in the 70s are leaving their colleges at an increasing
rate" (p. 513).

Lessons Learned

The fourth research question asked what the presidents and vice presidents who
responded to the survey learned from their career detours? Referring to activities like
career setbacks, Ruderman and Ohlott (2002), say, "Try to see how things could have
turned out differently and how you might have acted differently to make that happen.
Think about what you got form an opportunity, even if it didn't work out the way you
would have liked" (p. 155).

Awareness of Organizational Politics

The community college presidents and vice presidents learned lessons about
organizational politics from their career detours. Fifty-eight percent of the respondents
reported that their career detours taught them that there are political/power issues in most

community colleges. One respondent noted, "Create your own contingency plan, and do not rely exclusively on others for help. Do not burn any bridges as you may need to call on former supervisors and other colleagues well into the future." Gallagher (2000) says of organizational politics, "You…need to intimately understand the unwritten rules of your corporation [college] and what is expected of you" (p. 31). Another respondent reported, "I believe in putting all the information out. Those who would do you in with it will get what they deserve sooner or later, but the vast majority of people will be grateful and give you greater support."

One respondent stated, "Realize that you can only control that part of the world that is in your job description. Offer opinions when asked and accept and implement decisions even if you don't agree with them. If you can't do that comfortably, you are probably not in the right organization." She stated, "Rather than try to change the organization you're in, go find one that is a better fit for you. Everyone, yourself included, will be happier in the long run."

Question 19A asked if the respondents perceived that at least some of their career advances/detours were influenced by their failure to completely understand the informal power structure within their colleges. Using a t-test, the proportions of "yes" answers from one experience level to the next were compared. At a significance level of 0.10, the p-values for comparisons between 6-10 years and 11+ years, and also between 1-5 years and 11+ years, allowed rejection of the null hypothesis for these two cases (see Table 4.16). If a woman experiences a detour early in her career, she may be quick to ascribe it to traditional stereotypes associated with gender. As she matures, though, her perspective

can change in such a way that she recognizes other reasons for hitting that earlier career

barrier. In another sense, with age she may realize that her career detour was not as

catastrophic as she originally thought.

Table 4.16: Comparison Test by Experience Group for Question 19A

Question 19A: On your career ladder as a community college leader, have you every felt that decisions about your professional future were influenced by the perception that a woman could not do the job?

Exp group	Proportion Yes Q19A	N	Comparison	t-score	DF	p-value (2-tail)
1-5 yr (1)	0.315789	38	1 and 2	-0.64941	64	0.518399
6-10 yr (2)	0.392857	28	1 and 3	2.15417	54	0.035707
11+ yr (3)	0.055556	18	2 and 3	2.542626	44	0.014596

Self-Awareness

An important lesson learned by many of the respondents to the survey was the

importance of self-awareness. Sixty-four percent of those who responded stated that they

realized the importance of knowing their core values. Kouzes and Posner (2002) explain:

> Values influence every aspect of our lives: our moral judgments, our responses to
> others, our commitments to personal and organizational goals. Values set the
> parameters for the hundreds of decisions we make every day. Options that run
> counter to our value system are seldom acted upon; and if they are it's done with a
> sense of compliance rather than commitment. Values constitute our personal
> "bottom line." (p. 48)

Fifty-eight percent of the respondents truly believed that being authentic was of

utmost importance. In other words, it was important to be genuine with their colleagues.

Ruderman and Ohlott (2002) point out, "Authenticity has to do with being able to

channel your actions so your life embodies you goals and beliefs" (p. 194). Ruderman

(2004) elaborates on authenticity:

> The desire for self-understanding is important for both men and women. Self-clarity allows the individual to grow by enabling her to recognize her values so as to live authentically, improve her ability to connect with others, enable agentic behavior, and allow her to make choices that produce feelings of wholeness. (p. 277)

Kouzes and Posner (2002) continue this thought, "You must know what you care about.

Why? Because you can only be authentic when leading others according to the principle

that matter most to you" (p. 52).

Fifty-seven percent of the respondents stated that they learned to keep focused on

their personal goals as well as the goals of their colleges. Interestingly, when asked what

advice they would give to young women who wanted to ascend to a community college

vice presidency or presidency, 57 percent emphasized the importance of focusing on

college goals as well as on personal goals.

A chi-square test was performed on question 16F that asked if the women

surveyed had learned the importance of keeping focused as a result of their career

detour/interruption, and question 18A that asked if a current woman leader would give

this same piece of advice to a young woman who wanted to move into community

college executive leadership. The calculated p-value of 0.09173 was low enough to

allow the null hypothesis to be rejected (see Table 4.17). There appears to be a positive

dependence between responses to the two questions—in other words, women who have

learned the importance of staying focused want to pass that advice on to the next

generation of women leaders in community colleges.

Table 4.17: Chi-square Results for Questions 16F and 18A

Question 16F: Did your career detour teach you the importance of keeping focused?
Question 18A: Would you advise a young woman who is interested in moving into community college
administration to stay focused on her career goals?

		OBSERVED			EXPECTED	
	Q18A	Yes	No	Total	Yes	No
Q16F						
Yes		26	10	36	22.28571	13.71429
No		26	22	48	29.71429	18.28571
Total		52	32	84		

df = 1
chi-square = 2.84375
p-value = 0.09173

When the responses to Question 16F are broken down by experience level, the

proportions of "yes" answers reveal a downward trend. In a t-test at the 0.10 significance

level, the null hypothesis could be rejected for comparisons between 1-5 and 11+ years of

experience. A comparison of these results shows a significant difference between only

these two groups, but the same general decrease still appears to a lesser degree from 1-5

years to 6-10 years (see Table 4.18). When younger women assume leadership positions,

they may tend to think that simply directing more time and energy toward them can solve

any and all problems they encounter. With time, they come to realize that there are other

resources at their disposal for meeting such challenges. They do not have to solve all the

problems by themselves.

Table 4.18: Comparison Test by Experience Group for Question 16F

Question 16F: Did your career detour teach you the importance of keeping focused?

Exp group	Proportion Yes Q16F	N	Comparison	t-score	DF	p-value (2-tail)
1-5 yr (1)	0.684211	38	1 and 2	1.513703	64	0.135024
6-10 yr (2)	0.5	28	1 and 3	1.71577	54	0.091937
11+ yr (3)	0.444444	18	2 and 3	0.368133	44	0.714539

Following through to accomplish organizational goals was just one management challenge faced by the community college presidents and vice presidents who responded to the survey. In addition, they realized that they needed to give time to their colleagues. Forty-three percent became aware that they needed to develop empathy for their colleagues. One respondent summed up this revelation as follows: "People don't care about what you think, until they know you care." Gallagher (2000) echoes this sentiment when she says, "People willingly follow leaders who are generous, kind, thoughtful, and forthright" (p. 94).

Fifty-two percent of the respondents stated the importance of knowing their capabilities. For instance, one president/vice president stated, "Don't underestimate you capabilities. Men don't underestimate theirs."

Age

Does age have anything to do with how women in executive leadership roles in community colleges handle career detours? Eighty-eight percent of the women who responded to the survey agreed that the wisdom gained through maturity and previous

experiences helped them maneuver through their career detours. Sixty-eight percent of the respondents believed that with maturity came the belief that the right thing would happen with patience and endurance. Sixty-six percent believed that after on-the-job experiences that came with longevity, women learned how to maneuver through the system.

One respondent added, "The older you are, the easier it is to see that many things just take time, sometimes years, before you see results. When you're younger and trying to create successes that will help you move forward in your career, you don't want to wait years." She confirms, "But it works because when you're in the ranks, you can take on smaller, more quickly accomplished projects and be successful in the project and the career building process." Another respondent concurred, "With age comes wisdom, not much is new after decades in the business. What hasn't killed us makes us stronger." Eighty-five-percent of the respondents agreed with these words.

To investigate the idea that with age came wisdom and emotional strength, Question 20 asked if the respondents perceived that older women in executive leadership positions had developed more emotional endurance and were better able to handle career detours than younger women. The proportions of respondents in the three age categories (30-39 combined with 40-49, 50-59, and 60-69) were compared using a t-test.

Table 4.19 shows the results of the test. At a significance level of 0.10, the null hypothesis can be rejected for comparisons between the 30-49 year bracket and each of the other two groups. However, this was not the case for proportions of "yes" answers between these two older groups. The issue in this case is one of naiveté on the part of the

younger women, who have not yet learned to develop the emotional resources of their

older counterparts.

Table 4.19: Comparison Test by Age Group for Question 20

Question 20: Do you think older women in executive leadership positions have developed more emotional endurance and are better able to handle career detours/stalls than younger women?

Age group	Proportion Yes Q20	N	Comparison	t-score	DF	p-value (2-tail)
30-49 (1/2)	0.571428571	7	1/2 and 3	-2.44491	58	0.017547
50-59 (3)	0.905660377	53	1/2 and 4	-1.9261	25	0.065535
60-69 (4)	0.9	20	3 and 4	0.073255	71	0.941809

The lessons learned by the respondents to the survey considered the extent to

which age helps women deal with career roadblocks. Question 21B asked the respondents

if they perceived that older women in executive leadership positions had more emotional

intelligence than younger women preparing themselves for community college

leadership. Specifically, this question asked if older women developed the

knowledge/belief that the right thing would happen with patience and endurance. A

comparison of the proportion of "yes" answers revealed no significant differences

between age groups, based on p-values that were not low enough to reject the null

hypothesis. However, the proportion does increase from 30-49 to 60-69 to an extent that

is almost large enough to pass the t-test (see Table 4.20). As with Question 20, the

younger women had yet developed the coping skills that the older women possessed—in

this case, hindsight and reflection on past experiences.

Table 4.20: Comparison Test by Age Group for Question 21B

Question 21B: If you agree that older women in executive leadership positions have more emotional endurance than younger women, do you think that they sense that the right thing will happen with patience and endurance?

Age group	Proportion Yes Q21B	N	Comparison	t-score	DF	p-value (2-tail)
30-49 (1/2)	0.142857	7	1/2 and 3	-0.85191	59	0.397706
50-59 (3)	0.296296	54	1/2 and 4	-1.48029	27	0.150371
60-69 (4)	0.454545	22	3 and 4	-1.31882	74	0.191297

After a majority of respondents answered Question 20 in the affirmative, they were asked if on-the-job experience helped them learn how to maneuver through the political systems of their organizations in Question 21A. A comparison of the proportion of "yes" answers from the three age groups resulted in rejection of the null hypothesis, based on p-values for each pair of groups (see Table 4.21). The fact that the positive response rates are similar to each other suggests that women learn the value of practical experience early in their careers and never forget it.

Table 4.21: Comparison Test by Age Group for Question 21A

Question 21A: If you agree that older women in executive leadership positions have more emotional endurance than younger women, do you also agree that after one-the-job experience, women learn how to maneuver through the system?

Age group	Proportion Yes Q21A	N	Comparison	t-score	DF	p-value (2-tail)
30-49 (1/2)	0.571429	7	1/2 and 3	-0.49898	59	0.61965
50-59 (3)	0.666667	54	1/2 and 4	-0.53519	27	0.596897
60-69 (4)	0.681818	22	3 and 4	-0.1275	74	0.898889

When asked in Question 21C if they perceived that the older a woman gets, the more she knows about herself, her values, and her ability to navigate through a career detour, a majority of the respondents answered "yes." A t-test on the proportions of responses from the three age groups led to p-values that were low enough to reject the null hypothesis when the 30-49 group was compared to either of the others. However, the 50-59 and 60-69 proportions did not differ significantly from one another (see Table 4.22).

Table 4.22: Comparison Test by Age Group for Question 21C

Question 21C: If you agree that older women in executive leadership positions have more emotional endurance that younger women, do you also believe that the older a women gets, the more she knows about herself, her values, and her abilities?

Age group	Proportion Yes Q21C	N	Comparison	t-score	DF	p-value (2-tail)
30-49 (1/2)	0.285714	7	1/2 and 3	-2.31471	59	0.024128
50-59 (3)	0.722222	54	1/2 and 4	-2.36115	27	0.025692
60-69 (4)	0.772727	22	3 and 4	-0.45346	74	0.651543

Another lesson that came from women's career detours was the realization seen in question 21D that asked if the respondents perceived that with maturity, both men and women realized that living to work was not emotionally or physically healthy. Overall, 43 percent of the respondents agreed that with maturity, both men and women realized that work did not have to dominate their lives. Table 4.23 details the results of a t-test on the proportion of "yes" answers in the different age groups. When the 60-69 sample was compared against either of the younger groups, the calculated p-value was low enough to

reject the null hypothesis; between these latter groups, though, the null could not be

rejected.

Table 4.23: Comparison Test by Age Group for Question 21D

Question 21D: If you agree that older women in executive leadership positions have more emotional endurance than younger women, do you also believe that with maturity, both men and women realize that living to work is not emotionally or physically healthy?

Age group	Proportion Yes Q21D	N	Comparison	t-score	DF	p-value (2-tail)
30-49 (1/2)	0	7	1/2 and 3	-2.42365	59	0.018451
50-59 (3)	0.481481	54	1/2 and 4	-2.20374	27	0.036254
60-69 (4)	0.454545	22	3 and 4	0.213288	74	0.831689

Younger women in executive leadership in community colleges tend to immerse

themselves in the advancement of their career goals and give little thought to taking an

emotional self-inventory. With maturity comes a degree of resilience, combined with an

understanding that the job is not everything. By this time, a woman has had a chance to

start a family and /or establish a personal life that can be as fulfilling as her work, if not

more so.

Question 22 asked the respondents if they perceived that older women with a

wealth of community college leadership experience did not tend to recover from career

stalls as rapidly as younger women in the same positions. Here, a t-test on the distribution

of answers among age groups led to a rejection of the null hypothesis when the 30-49

group was compared to either of the other two. T these youngest respondents regarded

their older counterparts as being somewhat less resilient in terms of recovering from

career stalls.

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The issue in this case is one of self-evaluation versus evaluation by outside parties who have little in common with the people they are judging. In addition, the meaning of "rapidly" may very well change as women leaders grow older; what they think is quick now may seem very slow to a younger generation.

Table 4.24: Comparison Test by Age Group for Question 22

Question 22: Do you think older women with a wealth of leadership experience in the community college tend to be inflexible and don not really recover as rapidly form career stalls as younger women?

Age group	Proportion Yes Q22	N	Comparison	t-score	DF	p-value (2-tail)
30-49 (1/2)	0.285714	7	1/2 and 3	2.383603	55	0.020623
50-59 (3)	0.04	50	1/2 and 4	2.541956	26	0.017325
60-69 (4)	0	21	3 and 4	0.929703	69	0.355766

Question 23 asked the respondents if they perceived that once women have endured one or more personal/professional storms, they develop more self-confidence. The p-values from a proportion comparison test led to a failure to reject the null hypothesis for all three pairs of groups. Thus, there is no statistically significant difference among the proportion of "yes" responses in the three age groups; the same is true for the proportions among the three experience groups. Among age groups, though, the response rate decreases to the point where it is almost significant (see Table 4.25). The older a woman is, the more likely she is to have encountered a considerable number of difficult times in her professional life. As a result, after repeatedly encountering such opposition, her self-confidence may be so worn down that she sees little justification in continuing her work.

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Table 4.25: Comparison Test by Age Group for Question 23

Question 23: Do you think that once a woman has endured one or more personal/professional storms, she tends to develop more self-confidence, especially when it comes to surviving career detours?

Age group	Proportion Yes Q23	N	Comparison	t-score	DF	p-value (2-tail)
30-49 (1/2)	1	7	1/2 and 3	0.958411	56	0.341975
50-59 (3)	0.882353	51	1/2 and 4	1.424425	26	0.166216
60-69 (4)	0.761905	21	3 and 4	1.291219	70	0.200875

In reality, women in community college leadership are pushed and pulled from their career goals much like their counterparts in the corporate sector. They encounter some of the same roadblocks to career advancement including family, personal health, and financial crises. Other roadblocks include organizational politics, gender issues, and, in the case of higher education, the need for an advanced degree. The lessons they leaned from their career detours were not very different from the women in corporate America. They learned the importance of support from family and colleagues, the necessity of being emotional intelligent and the value of exhibiting emotional endurance, the need for a mentor. What seemed to make these women different from their counterparts in the corporate world was their attitude. The openness of the community college to women leaders, as well as the women's experience as community college instructors, gave them a sense of self-assurance that they would achieve their ambition even if it took them longer than originally planned.

CHAPTER V

CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Introduction

The purpose of this study was to examine the perceived factors that caused women headed for community college executive leadership to detour from their original career plans. This study examined the similarities and dissimilarities of such women and their counterparts in the corporate sector. It looked at how women leaders in community colleges responded emotionally, cognitively, and behaviorally to interruptions/barriers in their career paths. Another focus was on the lessons women leaders in community colleges and business learned from these interruptions/barriers.

There are numerous studies on the subject of women's quests to fulfill their ambitions in the corporate sector; however, little has been done to study the accompanying barriers to intended career paths for women in the community college setting. The problem for this study was to describe the patterns and the results of temporary barriers to intended career paths for women in executive leadership positions in community colleges.

Data were collected in two phases—qualitative and quantitative. Phase I consisted of telephone interviews with a national sample of 22 women who were either community college presidents or vice presidents. They were purposefully selected from

membership lists for the American Association of Community Colleges, the National Alliance for Community and Technical Colleges, the National Council for Instructional Administrators, and other professional organizations. Each respondent was asked the same series of nine questions (see Appendix A).

A 31-item survey was used in Phase II to examine barriers to perceived career plans of women in executive leadership in community colleges. Informed respondent interviews helped guide the development of the survey questions (see Appendix C).

Two hundred forty-eight women leaders at community colleges were asked to complete the survey, resulting in a total of 85 responses. Their names were compiled using membership lists from the organizations mentioned above. In addition, community college Web sites, readily available through the Internet, were used to identify appropriate potential respondents.

Chi-square tests were carried out on pairs of questions in an attempt to find any dependence of one response on the other, while t-tests were used to investigate differences in response rates to certain questions based on age and experience. All tests were carried out at a significance level of 0.10.

Results of the study revealed that women in community college leadership, although faced with many of the same kinds of career barriers as women in the corporate sector, seemed to display an optimistic attitude toward the issues that impeded their immediate progress toward their career goals.

Research Questions

The first research question sought to find out what factors cause women in community college leadership positions to detour from their original plans. The women in this study perceived that there were two types of factors that affected the time it took to achieve their goals.

The first was made up of issues that tended to "pull" them from their career focus. These included family and health-related issues such as the birth of a child, childcare, elder care, precedence of spouse's career over the respondent's, divorce, and even the death of a close family member. Personal health issues for the women in the study dealt with diseases such as cancer, and emotional issues such as grieving and life balance.

The second factor that affected the speed with which the women attained their career goals had to do with organizational "push" factors—events or situations outside of the family that tended to force a woman off her career path temporarily. These included gender issues in community colleges, the need for an advanced degree, and the lack of understanding of politics in the community college setting.

The first part of the second research question asked what women in community college executive leadership perceived as intervening factors that diverted, reshaped, or undermined their career plans in this field. The second part asked if there were similarities and dissimilarities with women in executive leadership positions in the corporate sector.

Family/health-related issues often caused the women in this study to postpone career goals for a time. Childbirth, elder care, divorce, and personal health problems were the most frequently mentioned experiences that tended to divert the women temporarily from the pursuit of their careers.

Many of the women were temporarily sidetracked from their career goals when they interviewed for new positions, internally and externally, and were not hired. At that point, many were faced with the decision of whether to move to another community college, or else stay in their current positions and explore other career possibilities. Influencing this decision was the importance of a spouse's job and emotional issues surrounding moving young children and teenagers. A few women said they did not want to move because they liked living in their communities and did not want to leave.

Taking a lateral position often reshaped the women's career plans. Many took such a step as a way to prepare themselves for additional roles at their colleges, discovering that they had found a springboard into another career in education. A few of the women mentioned that they worked outside of education, but when they were hired by community colleges, they found the collegiate world exciting and later opted to stay. Several women made a conscious decision to move into leadership positions in the community college setting. They were instructors or mid-level managers who decided to pursue an advanced degree in order to move ahead.

Some women in the study felt that their careers had been undermined by their lack of understanding of how organizational politics worked at the community college. They mentioned that gender issues could often surface. For instance, several women had to

learn how to maneuver in the male-dominated boardrooms of community colleges. They also learned that other women in their organizations did not always support them in the pursuit of their career goals.

Women in the corporate sector shared many of the "push" and "pull" factors with those in community college leadership. Balancing family and career, dealing with stereotypical labels, learning to work within a male-dominated organization, and feeling isolated are examples of some of the forces that affected the career path of women in both the corporate sector and higher education leadership.

The dissimilarity between women leaders in these two settings seemed to be centered on their attitude toward their careers in general. Those in community college leadership felt that they worked in a fluid environment, which allowed them, options as well as opportunities for advancement. For example, a few leaders noted that they voluntarily took on lateral entry assignments in order to learn more about their colleges to prepare themselves for advancement.

The women in the study did not worry about re-entering the workforce after taking time off for child rearing, but this was a great concern for their counterparts in the corporate sector. Women in business worried that they would not be able to regain the lost ground if they took time off during their children's preschool years.

The third research question asked how women leaders in community college leadership responded emotionally, cognitively, and behaviorally to interruptions/barriers to their career plans. During the interview phase of this study, the women did not want to refer to their career detours as "setbacks"; they preferred to use the terms "career detour"

or "career roadblock." This choice of words reflected their positive attitude toward their professional goals.

Many of the women in the study indicated that it took them longer than they planed to reach their goals. Emotionally, they viewed career setbacks as simply detours on the way to their destination. Another reflection of this positive attitude is that even when they were in a holding pattern for such issues as childcare, they used the time to advance their careers. For instance, one survey respondent completed a degree while she was staying at home with her child.

Cognitively, the women in the study realized the importance of support from family, colleagues, and mentors as they dealt with career detours. They depended on their families to be understanding about the demands of their leadership positions. They were touched when their colleagues supported them through career disappointments such as not being selected for an internal promotion, and they realized the importance of both having a mentor and being a mentor to rising leaders.

Behaviorally, the women in the study and women in the corporate sector knew that they had to develop a "thick skin" and quickly get over disappointments that blocked the attainment of their career goals. Events in this category included not being selected for an internal/external promotion and being asked to take a lateral position.

The women in both community college and the corporate sector became more isolated as they rose to higher-level positions. They tended to maintain a certain personal distance between themselves and their colleagues. They continued to share personal

information with their colleagues as a way to build trust; however, they gave careful thought about what kinds of details they shared.

Behaviorally, after a career detour and the introspection that followed, the women in the study became better listeners, better time managers, and more sensitive to those around them as well. They took more time for their family and themselves, realizing they had to pull back when the job became obsessive. Like their corporate counterparts, many women in this study put the needs of their families ahead of their career goals. Some maintained a holding pattern, waiting for children to grow up or for husbands to make career decisions that matched their own.

Women in both community college leadership and women in the corporate sector also recognized the need for physical exercise. Women in this study found that this activity not only relieved stress, but also improved their health and stamina.

Several lessons came with age and experience for women in community college leadership as well as in corporate leadership. A primary lesson was the necessity of employing emotional intelligence as defined by Goleman (1995, p. 81) and Gardner (1993, p. 9). The women in this study had to understand themselves, their core values and their goals, but they also had to grasp the importance of good relationships with their colleagues and peers and how to work cooperatively with them.

For the women in this study, creating trust between faculty, staff and the president was a prime consideration because a lack of internal support from colleagues could keep women (and men) from advancing in their careers. For example, Dr. Karen Grosz, the former president of New Hampshire Community Technical Colleges, was dismissed in

part to lack of confidence in her by the faculty. An article in the *Chronicle of Higher Education* noted that community colleges are not exempt from votes of lack of confidence in presidents (Shaw, 2005, p. 1). The ramifications from a vote of no confidence are long lasting--professionally and emotionally.

The importance of flexibility was emphasized by a majority of women in the study. Most were not bound by a career timeline. They were able to take on new assignments, move to other community colleges, and even remain in their current position and find ways to create new interest and vibrancy in that assignment. Rather than focusing on one executive leadership position at only one community college, the women kept themselves open to new challenges and career opportunities.

Age provided a coping mechanism for women in the study who were affected by career detours. Taylor (2001) points out, "Only in adulthood are meaning structures clearly formed and developed and the revision of established meaning perspective takes place" (p. 288). The women in the study learned the importance of life balance. To some degree, work ceased to be the center of their lives. They began to think about their personal and emotional health, and they realized with time that they did not have to try to accomplish everything at once.

Women in this study expressed the importance of acting ethically and leading by example. One respondent summarized, "We can't do everything right, but make sure everything we do is right."

Women in both the corporate sector and the community college setting thought they had broken through the "glass ceiling." However, they found that that gender issues

were still the source of career barriers in some instances. They found corporate boardrooms and community college boards of trustees still dominated by men. A widespread perception they encountered was that a woman might not be able to lead a community college as well as a man. The respondents to the survey seemed to feel that men had an easier time surviving career detours than women. Men are freer to move on to another college in order to jump-start their careers after a stall, while women may not always have that option. According to Fels (2004), "In conventional marriages women are expected to provide the emotional support required for their husbands' career advancement, with little or no expectation that it will be reciprocated" (p. 230).

<div align="center">Interpretation</div>

According to an article in *Community College Week* (2002), "About one–quarter of the two-year, post-secondary institutions in the United States have women presidents but degrees of breakthrough vary by state. In North Carolina, only 15 percent of the community college presidents are women, while in Massachusetts, one-third of the schools have a woman president" (Curtis, 2002, p. 5).

Women who aspire to executive leadership positions at community colleges need to be emotionally hardy because they will encounter career detours that tend to draw them off their career paths temporarily and sometimes permanently. Fels (2004) points out, "Many factors intervene to divert, reshape, or undermine women's ambitions as they proceed through their adult lives" (p. 29). Also, according to Hewlett and Luce (2005), "These women have invested heavily in their education and training. They have spent

years accumulating the skills and credentials necessary for successful careers. Most are not eager to toss that painstaking effort aside" (p. 45).

Women who wanted to lead community colleges faced many of the same career challenges faced by women in corporate America, including family and personal health care, gender issues, and organizational politics. Unlike their business counterparts, women in higher education, including community colleges, usually needed to acquire a Ph.D. or Ed.D. before they could apply for a vice presidency or presidency. This need is supported by Vaughn (2004), who notes that the community college presidency needs entry standards like all professions, and the doctorate is the entry standard for that position (p. B14).

Both groups of women relied heavily on their families to provide support as they worked their way through a career detour. Colleagues and mentors provided additional support as both groups worked to get back on track. The openness of the community college culture also helped the women in the study survive and fulfill their ambition.

Putting Things on Hold: Family and Personal Health Issues

Younger women in the study had not yet been affected by the need to take care of elderly parents; however, the older group was at that point and responded at a higher rate. These women continued to pursue their ambitions and were able to deal with elder care issues at the same time. Younger women need to be prepared for career obstacles such as elder care. Fels (2004) reminds them, "You must have the motivation to pursue your ambition over time and in the face of the inevitable obstacles" (p. 73).

Older women in the study were not tied to one geographic location because of young children or teenagers. Their children were grown, and they were able to move from one community college to another, while younger women were concerned about the amount of time they could spend with their families. Some even turned down promotions in order to avoid the perceived psychological trauma of moving young children or teenagers. They temporarily put their careers on hold in order to do what they thought was best for their families.

This brake on career goals is supported by Fels (2004) when she says, "Being sensitive to and providing for the needs of others, even at the expense of her own needs, is the emotional core of a woman's femininity. Women who act on their own behalf, rather than that of others, risk being seen as unfeminine" (p. 54). Hewlett and Luce (2005) reported on a study done in 2004 by Work-Life Policy, a New York-based nonprofit organization, that found, "Nearly four in ten highly qualified women (37%) report that they left work voluntarily at some point in their careers. Among women who have children, that statistic rises to 43%" (p. 44). Again, young women who plan to move toward executive leadership in community colleges must realize that their families may pose a temporary obstacle in the path to the attainment of their ambition.

Opening Closed Doors: Need for an Advanced Degree

Clearly, lack of a doctorate—either a Ph.D. or an Ed.D.—was a potential stumbling block on the road to the completion of career goals for women in community college leadership. Fels (2004) feels that ambition is made up of two interdependent

components, skill and recognition (p. 211). Women in the study voluntarily went into a career stall in order to finish a doctorate so that they could prepare to become vice presidents or presidents of a community college. The need for a potential woman leader to have a doctorate is seen in a study completed by the National Opinion Research Center at the University of Chicago that found, "The annual total of women receiving Ph.D.'s had increased by more than 50 percent in a decade, growing at over twice the rate of men getting those degrees" ("Women Gain Doctorates," 2000, p. 5). Women who have the ambition to enter community college leadership need to realize that they may need an advanced degree in order to fulfill their goals. Those who decide to obtain a doctorate will need self-discipline, time, money, energy, patience, and support from family and friends while they are in a temporary career holding pattern that could last as long as seven years, according to the National Opinion Research Center (*Society*, 2000, p. 5).

The "Push" Factor: Organizational Politics

This study looked at the ways respondents perceived they were pushed away from the pursuit of their career goals by a lack of understanding of organizational politics. An article in *Society for Human Resource Management* (2004) illustrates this career issue for women, saying, "Women whose ambitions are not fulfilled may be…hampered by well-ingrained corporate cultures" (p. 2), including the political/power structure of the community college. Failure to understand organizational politics often put the women into a holding pattern. For example, they took a lateral move, or they interviewed and

were turned down for an internal promotion and continued in their same job until they

felt ready to attempt to move forward with their career goals.

Other discoveries about organizational politics included the perception that

women did not always support each other within the framework, and the organization did

not always have the best interests of the aspiring women leaders at heart. Carol

Gaallagher (2000) gives an example of how organizational politics can be misread by

rising women leaders:

> The skills you may need to get into the executive level (and I'd be the first to
> admit you may have to be relatively aggressive) may not serve you well once you
> get there. After you become a member of the "team," you need to be a team
> player, and that requires a different set of behaviors. Indeed, managers—
> especially women, unfortunately—often antagonize others if they are perceived as
> overly ambitions or a threat. (p. 105)

In order to stay on their career paths, young women who want to be part of the

community college executive leadership team need to accept the fact that organizational

politics are alive and well at virtually every community college. Also, they need to be

aware of the importance of emotional competence in their climb to executive leadership

roles. Gardner (1993) describes emotional intelligence as "the ability to understand other

people: what motivates them, how they work, how to work cooperatively with them" (p.

9). Goleman (1995) emphasizes that emotional intelligence involves knowing the value

of relationships with administrators, faculty, and staff (p. 81). In addition, he stresses the

importance of developing emotional competency, the knowledge of how to use one's

emotional intelligence (p. 24-25). The women in the survey stressed the importance of

developing empathy for others, relying on personal inner strength, and psychological

hardiness as a means to successfully work through a career detour and to get back on track.

Remnants of the "Good Ol' Boys" Network: Gender Issues

The women in this study faced some of the same gender issues faced by their counterparts in corporate America. Both groups of women felt like they were under the microscope compared to men who held the same positions. This point is supported by Dr. Narcisa Polonio (Association of Community College Trustees), who says, "Women have often faced unreasonably high expectation about what they can achieve, especially if they are the first females to fill certain positions. By being unrealistic with our expectations of them, we set them up for failure" (Lane, 2002, p. 9).

The women in the study felt that college administrators were more forgiving of men than women when addressing career detours. This perception may be due in part to the networking system that men have developed through their careers. An article entitled "The Glass Ceiling: Domestic and International Perspectives"(2004) mentions, "Women may not have full access to informal networks men use to develop work relationships in the company, and these networks often tend to exclude women due to the nature of their activities or the perception that these are 'male activities'" (p. 3). Kenndey (1998) quotes Dr. Barbara Moss, author and career development expert, who underscores this idea when she says:

> There are subtle factors at play, such as the availability of mentors. Recent research at one large firm into why more women weren't occupying its senior

positions found that a major roadblock was that women did not have mentors the way high-potential men did. (p. 4)

Ruderman and Ohlott (2002) say, "The limitations may be greater for women than for men at a given level, as women are often stereotyped as more vulnerable than men to begin with. In addition, there may be few if any female peers to get feedback from, socialize with, or learn from" (Kennedy, 1998, pp. 41-42).

Women whose ambition is to enter community college executive leadership need to be aware that remnants of the "good ol' boys" network still exists at some level in the administration, even if it is only that a majority of men sit on boards of trustees. Over the years, men have been taught the importance of networking; women, though, have to consciously work at developing their own support system. Whether women are in leadership positions in the corporate sector or higher education, they need to develop a "thick skin."

The Beginning of the Third Act: Age and Experience

Age and experience in leadership positions affected how the women in this study viewed their career detours/roadblocks. The older leaders learned that they did not have to devote all their energy to overcoming these obstacles immediately. A study of high-achieving women in senior management positions by Gersick and Kram (2002) supports this observation. One of their subjects said, "Years ago, It was always, 'I'm gonna show him that I can do this!' and 'I've got to make it to this level by the time I'm this age'….[I was] on the treadmill looking at the speedometer saying, 'If I don't get up to 120 miles

per hour, I'm going to fail!'" She concludes, "Not any more….I don't feel I have anything to prove anymore….And I think it's just a matter of maturity" (p.119). Sheehy (1995) notes, "By the time they reach their fifties, most educated women have acquired the skills and self-knowledge to master complex environments and change the conditions around them" (p. 151).

One of the skills that older women leaders in the community college setting attained was the social competence that matters in the workplace. In *Working with Emotional Intelligence,* Goleman (1998) writes, "At the heart of this competence are two abilities: empathy, which involves reading the feelings of others, and social skills, which allow handling those feelings artfully" (p. 24). The study revealed that older women were more resilient than younger women, probably due to emotional competence developed with age. The implication for younger women is that they need not rush into executive leadership positions at community colleges. In other words, they do not need to be so anxious that they skip vital experiential steps along the road to achieving their goals. At each new level of responsibility, they improve their emotional competence as well as other leadership skills.

Dr. Deborah DiCroce, president of Tidewater Community College in Norfolk, Virginia, emphasized the importance of learning on every rung of the career ladder. She gave this advice to aspiring women leaders in community colleges, "Don't just say, 'In five years, I'll be doing this, and be a college president.' If you do that, you miss the greatest job of all, and that's the journey. The getting there is the greatest part of it all" (Lane, 2002, p. 9).

Certainly, the older a woman becomes, the more likely it is that she will have overcome one or more detours in her career. If a woman continually encounters opposition to the achievement of her ambition, as may have been the case with some of the women in this study, she tends to lose her drive toward her professional goals. When the age of the respondents was considered, overall the women in the study agreed that older women did not necessarily gain more self-confidence as they worked their way through career detours. In fact, after surviving multiple career detours, older women may decide to abandon their ambitions. More experienced women did not respond "yes" with any more frequency than younger women when asked the question implying that more experience helps women develop self-confidence.

These findings are supported by Kanter, who notes that women's decisions to interrupt their careers affect their confidence. Referring to women in the corporate sector, the author says, "Women who leave the work force for a time do sometimes begin to doubt themselves in their professional skills and ability….It begins to feel more and more overwhelming to step back in, because you'll have to learn a lot of things again and convince people of your skills" (McGinn, 2005. p. 67). When successful women lose confidence, they lose both the opportunity for recognition and a chance to fulfill their ambition.

The career detours for women in community colleges on the road to executive leadership were not that different from those for women in the corporate sector. Both groups of women faced many of the same "push" and "pull" factors that caused them to put the fulfillment of their ambitions temporarily on hold. The difference was a high

degree of optimism toward overcoming career detours by women in community college leadership. This optimism wass due in part to the newness of the community college, according to Dr. Martha Nesbitt, president of Gainesville College in Gainesville, Georgia. She says, "The relative newness of the community to the higher education system has been a boon for women. We are the newest kids on the block. Most two-year colleges really got their start in the 1960s so they weren't as bound by tradition as universities and state colleges" (Lane, 2002, p. 5). In a community college environment that is more open-minded about women in leadership positions, the women in this study fulfilled their ambitions through mastery and perseverance, even though they often took one or more detours on the road to career success.

Implications

If women are to become effective community college leaders, the road to the highest offices needs to be redesigned. First, because the role of today's community college leader is rapidly expanding, women (and men) need a variety of definitions for a workday and work week, especially if they deal with family-related issues. Next, training for potential community college leaders (especially women) needs to be overhauled. Third, women themselves have to realize that they do not always have the same leadership styles as their male counterparts, nor do they have to mimic their leadership styles.

Changes in Policies

There will always be obstacles, especially those associated with femininity, that get in the way of women's career success. Belkin (2005) recaps, "Some progress has been made toward a family-friendly workplace. 'Flextime' and 'telecommuting' and 'job sharing' have entered the lexicon full force in the last 15 years. But these policies and others like them merely change the structure of a working day, not the structure of a working life" (p. 10.1).

Belkin (2005) explains what new policies might look like:

> We must revamp outdated roads—ones that do not work for more than half the working population. It means building a tenure track that does not create a black hole during the prime child-bearing years, it means assuming that child-care leave can last years, not weeks, and that systems will exist to keep workers up to speed while they are away; it means a partnership track not only for the young and tireless but also for the older and wiser. (p. 10.1)

Shifting away from a hierarchical work environment toward a cross-functional team structure will provide women with the flexibility they need in order to deal with family-related issues. Policies allowing non-traditional work arrangements will certainly help women move through their specific career detours without totally pulling off the career highway.

If community colleges provide students with a variety of ways to graduate, including online, hybrid, and compressed courses, as well as traditional face-to-face courses, why do they not provide their employees with the same flexibility in their work schedules? Unfortunately, many community colleges still resemble the workplace of a

bygone era where faculty and staff clocked in and out at certain time. The only time to do productive work was between 9 a.m. and 5 p.m. Belkin (2005) uses an appropriate analogy to describe this situation:

> Imagine for a moment that the entire transportation of the United States—the infrastructure of highways and bridges, the airports or lack thereof—was exactly as it was at the start of the Industrial Revolution….Similarly, the design of the modern workplace is a product of a long-gone era. (p. 10.1)

In order for women to move into leadership positions in community colleges, they may need to take a different road to career development other than the traditional one in an archaic system. One suggestion is to provide women leaders a similar menu of choices for the workday, week, month, and year as presented to students.

According to Hewlett and Luce (2005), "Some women…merely need flexibility in when, where, and how they do their work" (p. 51). These authors further suggest that women on their way to leadership roles might benefit from flexibility in the arc of a career. This approach could include short-term assignments in which a professional takes on a portion of a project that she does best. This arrangement keeps skills sharp and provides flexibility at the same time (p. 52). Hewlett and Luce (2005) note that removing the stigma of flexible arrangements will not be easy. "It means crafting an imaginative set of policies, but even more important, it means eliminating the stigma that is often attached to such nonstandard work arrangements" (p. 52).

Changes in Practice

Vaughn (2004) points to community college presidents as primary change agents

in transforming the organizational culture when he emphasizes:

> Presidents should play a critical role in encouraging minority faculty members
> and administrators [including women] on their own campuses to pursue
> professional development, including earning a doctorate. Those people will then
> be well positioned to become vice presidents or other higher-level administrators
> who make up the small pool of presidential applicants from which governing
> boards select presidents. Presidents play a crucial role throughout the process:
> They are key in screening, inculcating, and selecting those administrators, and in
> most cases also serve as references for the ones who apply for presidencies.
> Presidents, then, must take responsibility for identifying, recruiting, supporting,
> sponsoring, and recommending promising minority candidates for presidential
> positions. (p. B14)

The need for an advanced degree is another temporary career detour for women

headed for executive leadership positions in community colleges. Vaughn (2004) gives

the following advice:

> If one wants to become a community college president today, one can greatly
> increase one's odds by doing the following: Be employed at a community college
> [90 percent of presidents were employed at a community college before becoming
> a president]; move into a low-level administrative position; return to graduate
> school, often as a part-time student, and earn a doctorate in higher education
> [more than 90 percent of current presidents have the earned doctorate, with more
> than 60 percent of those degrees in higher education]. (p. B14)

He continues, "The earned doctorate probably will remain the key to obtaining most

presidencies—as it should, since all professions need entry standards" (p. B14).

Fifty-six percent of the women in the study waited until they were mid-level managers to decide to pursue an executive leadership position; consequently, they were already deeply entrenched in their work and/or had family responsibilities. From a policy standpoint, community colleges need to realize the importance of flexible work schedules or short-term reduced workloads for women like these. From a practice standpoint, community colleges need to encourage women headed for leadership position to enroll in graduate programs to earn a doctorate. However, Piland and Wolf (2003) emphasize the importance of considering "the limitations of the university as a provider of leadership development services for aspiring community college leaders" (p. 3). Community colleges need to create their own programs to teach leadership skills, provide experiential learning, and nurture women's ambition.

In addition to retirement acting as a transforming agent for the organizational culture of community colleges, succession planning is a purposeful move toward altering the culture by using targeted leadership development to provide capable individuals to fill empty administrative positions due to retirements and vacancies.

Carroll (2004) makes the following argument for succession planning:

> Succession planning is not a clandestine strategy to immediately replace people in certain positions. It is a systematic process whereby professional and personal development is blended with a strategic plan to ensure that the organization is prepared to fill any position that becomes vacant, with the right person who possesses the right skills and attributes, at the right time. (p. 2)

Instituting succession planning as part of the strategic plan of the community college and purposefully identifying minorities, including women, as potential leaders

would not only provide encouragement to women leaders, but it would send the message

that senior-level leadership positions are no longer dominated by males. With time,

gender issues such as stereotyping may become negligible in the presidential hiring

process. In practice, the succession planning at community colleges usually involves

short-term leadership training programs.

In the following statement Wallin (2006), points out that leadership training is

ongoing:

> [Individuals] recognize a need to continually improve their ability to respond to rapid technological change and the globalization of community college education. Thus, one practical means of addressing the need for continuing leadership development is through short-term, high-impact programs in specifically identified areas. (p. 514)

Piland and Wolf (2005) state, "We believe that the challenge of providing development

programming for community college leaders is among the two or three most important

issues facing the enterprise. To overcome this crisis will require departures from the

patterns with which we have grown comfortable, new thinking, and sustained effort"

(p. 3). Through well-planned programs, women aspiring to rise to community college

presidencies will be able to develop personal and professional development plans.

Pascall, Parker, and Evetts (2000) write about women in higher education and the

uncertainty of their career plans as they set out on the road to success:

> Looking back on the personal histories that had brought them to higher education women acknowledged the accepted wisdom that a goal-oriented strategy for building their careers would have been more appropriate. They chided themselves for not pursuing it. (p. 63)

These thoughts echo Fels' (2004) theory that women of accomplishment often equate their success to luck or serendipity (p.30).

In addition, when done well, succession planning provides a focused mentoring program and an opportunity for women to network, both of which can help eliminate another element that affects career detours. A well-structured program also allows potential women leaders to learn the importance of taking time to really learn and develop personally and professionally at every level of administrative responsibility. Thus, succession planning must be purposefully directed to develop leadership skills in both men and women, and it needs to include experiences such as local internships that provide realistic experiences for would-be presidents and vice presidents.

Succession planning must be thought of as part of the strategic plan of community colleges. When these schools plan three to five years into the future for filling vacancies at the executive level of administration, the end products will be individuals who have spent adequate time in each rank of leadership responsibility, and administrators who have been able to successfully navigate the career detours of gender issues and organizational "pull" factors.

Hewlett and Luce (2005) state, "If women are to sustain their passion for work and their competitive edge—whether or not they take formal time out—they must keep ambition alive" (p. 54). They also call attention to "the urgent need to implement mentoring and networking programs that help women expand and sustain their professional aspirations….[Networks] provide the infrastructure within which women can earn recognition, as well as a safe platform from which to blow one's own horn

without being perceived as being too pushy" (p. 54). Dolesalek (2007) emphasizes the importance of networking. "Opportunities to network mean more than just meet-and-greets. They enable high potential employees to form an ongoing relationship with a senior leader, which can evolve into regular mentoring and a resource for tough problems or both" (p.20).

As more and more women are selected to become presidents and vice presidents at community colleges around the country, the need for an experienced mentor becomes a key issue in personal development. The need for high-level mentors is highlighted in the following statements:

> Boards should insist that new presidents have a mentor—someone from outside the campus who can serve as a sounding board and advisor—to meet with frequently, a service for which they should gladly offer to pay. Presidents have a lonely job, with few people to talk to about private concerns; they are often also sheltered from bad news that a mentor could convey in a confidential setting. (Shaw, 2005, p. B13)

Vaughn (2004) continues, "That [seeking out minority candidates] is a major challenge especially for presidents, who most likely came through the traditional pipeline themselves. If presidents are hesitant to act, then trustees must do so" (p. B14). Breaking out of the mindset of the traditionally male-dominated community college board will take time; however, the opportunity for change is approaching since "the turnover in leadership in community colleges will be unprecedented in the next decade as baby boomers retire" (Wallin, 2006, p. 513).

Suggestions for Future Research

Belkin (2005) comments, "A modern woman's life requires a different road, one with detours and slow lanes and onramps and offramps. She still gets there—maybe slowing in her 30's and sprinting in her 50's. Hers is not the wrong road—unless you assume the archaic infrastructure to be the right one" (p. 10.1). Curtis (2002) continues, "It takes effort to shift the cognitive and psychological gears to learn and understand a female leader—far more effort than a male. This may create a problem for some institutions or departments led by a long line of males" (p. 5).

A tremendous step in encouraging women to move into executive leadership in community colleges is a change in male-centered community colleges at their most basic level. Tedrow (1999) points out, "Creating change to improve the lives of women who are community college administrators may involve transforming the organizational culture" (p. 3).

Further research is needed to find out if organizations, including community colleges, acknowledge that women are creating a new paradigm for leadership. Greenberg and Sweeney (2005) conducted a written survey with follow-up interviews to find out what women leaders learned through adversity. The authors state, "The strong leadership profile exhibited by these women executives points to the future. The female view that we strengthen ourselves by strengthening others is re-defining leadership" (p. 36). Curtis (2002) states, "Female leaders are inclined to talk more about mentoring future leaders, both male and female, within their organizations. Female leaders have a

greater propensity to encourage others to enter the administrative 'pipeline,' thereby

ensuring the succession of institutional leadership" (p. 5).

The research of Greenbery and Sweeney (2005) reveal the following key findings

from a recent study by Caliper, a Princeton, New Jersey-based management-consulting

firm:

> Women leaders are more persuasive, have a stronger need to get things done and
> are more willing to take risks that their male counterparts. When women leaders
> combine these qualities with their openness, flexibility, empathy and strong
> interpersonal skills, a leadership style is created that is inclusive, consensus
> building and collaborative. (p. 34)

Women's leadership styles are "much more conducive to today's diverse

workplace, where information is shared freely, collaboration is vital, and teamwork

distinguishes the best companies" (Greenberg and Sweeney, 2005, p. 36). As the number

of women in community college leadership grows, a longitudinal study is needed to

discern if they are playing a larger role in consensus building and collaboration, and thus,

changing the language of community college leadership. However, in 1999, Tedrow and

Rhoads conducted a study analyzing women's leadership in community colleges and

noted the following:

> When institutions include women at the senior level, but maintain traditional
> standards and values, the women are often cast as outsiders. To reduce the tension
> and stress of their outsider status, they choose behaviors that reconciled traditional
> organizational expectations with their identity as women. (p. 9)

As most community colleges begin to think about succession planning, additional

research is needed to find the most effective plans. A national survey could provide a

model of effective succession planning to those colleges that are just beginning to

develop their own plans. For instance, Ebbers, Gallisath, and Rockel (2000) describe one

model program:

> The Iowa Association of Community Trustees, the Iowa Association of
> Community College Presidents, and the Iowa State University Higher Education
> Program created a partnership to develop women and minorities for leadership
> roles in community colleges. The Leadership Institute for a New Century (LINC)
> program…uses a combination of national and state community college leaders,
> community leaders, trustees, and university faculty members to offer personal and
> professional development activities for participants. (p. 375)

Another recommendation for future research might include replicating this study with all

levels of faculty and staff at a specific community college with the goal of understanding

perceptions of barriers to promotion. Is there a perception that organizational politics

hinders promotions? Is the "good ol' boys" network operating or slowly disappearing? Is

the college sensitive to family-related issues that affect faculty and staff? Does the

college give financial help and emotional support to those individuals who are pursuing

an advanced degree? By replicating this study and limiting the sample size to the

employees of a specific community college, a number of causes for women's career

detours may be identified.

<center>Conclusion</center>

The purpose of this study was to explore the perceptions that women in executive

leadership positions in community colleges had about career detours and what resources

they used to maneuver through their career detours and what lessons these women learned and took to heart from these experiences if they were to continue to be successful. Based on Fels' book *Necessary Dreams: Ambition in Women's Changing Lives* (2004), this study revealed that although women in community college executive leadership positions encountered many of the same career detours experienced by women in the corporate sector, they responded with emotional hardiness and continued up the career ladder. These detours tended to slow their pace of advancement, but nevertheless, they usually reached their goal—to be a community college president or vice president. Curtis (2002) describes the women who made it to the highest positions in their community colleges as "typically women who are relentlessly optimistic and driven by a mission [ambition]" (p. 5).

Most of the women presidents and vice presidents in the survey who stated they did not have a career plan described themselves as being flexible in their career goals. In reality though, they verified Fels' (2004) theory about why women shy away from the rewards of ambition:

> In telling their stories, these women of accomplishment used two main, well-worn narrative devices. One was the story in which the successful woman starts as a young innocent and is waylaid by circumstances and somehow bamboozled into her present, utterly surprising success. The alternative narrative is one in which the drive and organizing skills are acknowledged, but all of the female protagonist's efforts are on behalf of others—whether they be the poor, the Jews, the Catholic Church, the blind, or children. These are highly admirable lives, but somehow in these stories, the "cause" is front and center and the richness of the personal narrative gets lost. The memoirist's ambition is nowhere to be found. (p. 25)

Indeed, 78.5 percent of the women who responded to the survey said that they did not really have a career plan. They described themselves as taking advantage of opportunities as they came along, or they had a career plan but took one or more detours before accomplishing their professional goals. What can community colleges do to help women make it through their career detours and fulfill their ambition? The biggest obstacle for the attainment of women's ambition is the culture of the community college. While its openness to women leaders and fluidity of positions are sources of support for potential women leaders, the culture of the presidency and trustees is a hindrance to those who want to rise to the top administrative positions in the college. Because boards want to replace exiting presidents with ones who look like college presidents when they were in college, women face gender issues as well as the "good ol' boy" mentality. Women leaders in the corporate sector continue to face these same issues. Schuck and Liddle (2004) studied 93 female managers in the southeast to learn how they cognitively organized their experiences. The researchers found that "the women reported male stereotyping of women and exclusion from informal networks as the top two barriers to women's advancement" (p. 76).

The retirement of many community college presidents across the country will help solve this problem as new leaders take the reins. In addition, succession planning will help potential leaders formulate a plan and work their plan. Undoubtedly, some women will enjoy the flexibility of waiting for leadership opportunities to happen; however, succession planning will give others the structure they need to move ahead.

Women, like their male counterparts, will have formal mentoring programs designed to help them network and get around career detours as soon as possible.

Again, community colleges need to adapt their cultures to the needs of women for flexible scheduling. There will always be career barriers that focus on childcare, elder care, and personal health issues. As a counter measure, community colleges can offer flexible work schedules to provide to women who have been "pulled" off track a chance to stay involved with their colleges and their work.

Another culture assumption that needs changing is the belief that women who want to move into upper-level community college administration need a doctorate in education. This assumption that presidents need that degree will probably not change for many years, but presidents' doctorates do not necessarily have to be in education. Other fields have produced excellent leaders in the past.

The women in this study experienced career detours described in Fels' theory that women are forced to put their ambitions on hold because of society's view of femininity. Although they faced many of the career detours described by Fels, those who pursued an executive administrative position in community colleges were optimistic, had "thick skins," possessed unusually high levels of emotional competence, and had the support of family and colleagues. They looked at their career detours as temporary, continuing to work to fulfill their ambitions. The journey was almost always completed, although it took longer than most of the women imagined when they began.

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APPENDIX A

INTERVIEW QUESTIONS

1. Please tell me about one or more incidents, either personal or professional, that you consider career setbacks.

2. What skills and resources (emotional, network, financial, etc.) did you use to navigate through your career setback(s)?

3. What personal/professional lessons did you career setback(s) teach you?

4. What "blind spots" did you discover in your personal life or professional career as a result of your career setback(s)?

5. What constructive leadership lesson(s) did you learn as a result of your career setback?

6. How have you changed your approach to your chosen career path as a result of your career setback? (Probes include, e.g., different strategies at work, reprioritizing goals and life balance, etc.)

7. What changes have you seen in your resilience and your emotional commitment to work as a result of passing through your career setback?

8. When women who are community college leaders face a career setback, what advice would you give them?

9. How do you think career setbacks for women in community college administration are similar to or different from career setbacks for women in other higher education settings (4-year colleges and universities)? Similar to or different from career setbacks for women in K-12 educational settings? Similar to or

different from career setbacks for women in corporate or for-profit settings?

Similar to or different from career setbacks for men in each of those settings?

APPENDIX B

SURVEY E-MAIL COVER LETTER

Good Day:

Women in education have broken through the glass ceiling, but are there other types of barriers that cause career detours for these women? Graduate studies at the University of North Carolina at Greensboro fueled my interest in perceived career barriers for women in executive leadership positions in community colleges. As a result, this research topic became the basis for my doctoral dissertation.

With you help it's possible to discover what women in your position perceive as barriers to their career advancement and to determine how these women overcome the barriers and go on to be successful administrators. Please take a few minutes to complete the 15-minute electronic survey available through the line at the bottom of this message. Simply hold the Control key down and click on the URL, and you will be able to begin the survey.

By completing this electronic survey, you agree that you understand the procedures and any risks and benefits involved in this research. You are free to refuse to participate or to withdraw your consent to participate in this research at any time without penalty or prejudice; your participation is entirely voluntary. Your privacy will be protected because you will not be identified by name of geographic location as a participant in this project.

The University of North Carolina at Greensboro Institutional Review Board, which insures that research involving people follows federal regulations, has approved this research and this consent form. Questions regarding your rights as a participant in this project can be answered by calling Mr. Eric Allen at 336-256-1482. Questions regarding the research itself will be answered by Diann Back by calling 704-330-4392. Any new information that develops during the project will be provided to you if the information might affect your willingness to continue in the project.

The survey will be available to you for a period of ten days from the time you receive this message.

DBacksurvey

Thank you for participating in this research project. If you would like to have a summary of my study when it's completed, the results will be available to you simply by contacting me. Again, your cooperation in completing this survey is deeply appreciated.

Diann P. Back
Director
Leadership and Staff Development
Central Piedmont Community College
Charlotte, NC 29235
Telephone: 704-330-4392
E-mail: diann.back@cpcc.edu

APPENDIX C

SURVEY

Perceptions and Reactions to Career Stalls among Women in Executive Leadership Roles
in Community Colleges

You have been chosen to participate in this survey because you hold an influential
executive leadership position in a community college within the United States. Your
responses will help identify the career roadblocks that women in your position face. More
importantly, your answers will help other women plan for and understand their reactions
to the expected and unexpected detours that may happen along their career paths leading
to community college leadership. A career detour can be defined as any factor that pulls
women away from their jobs physically or emotionally, any factor that pushed women
temporarily to leave the job or workforce, or any factor that prevents career advancement.

Please respond to each question based on your own personal history and career path.
Completing this survey should take approximately 15 minutes. Thank you for
participating in this study.

Please mark the appropriate answers to each question as they apply to you.

1. Please check the appropriate description of yourself.

      A.   First generation college graduate (You are the first person in your immediate
          family to graduate from college.)
      B.   Second-generation college graduate (One or both parents are college
          graduates.)
      C.   Third-generation college graduate (One or both parents are college graduates and at
          least one maternal or paternal grandparent is a college graduate.)

2. Indicate your age range.

      A. 30-39
      B. 40-49
      C. 50-59
      D. 60-69
      E. 70 +

3. Indicate below the area of the country in which you currently live.

    A. Northeast (ME, NH, VT, MA, CT, RI, NY, PA, NJ,)
    B. Southeast (FL, GA, NC, SC, VA, DE, MD, DC)
    C. Midwest (IL, MI, IN, OH, MN, WI, KS)
    D. South (TN, MS, LA, KY, AL, WV, AR, OK, TX, MO)
    E. Northwest (AK, OR, WA, ID)
    F. West (NV, CO, MT, UT, WY)
    G. Southwest (CA, NM, AZ, HI)

4. Indicate below your race.

    A. White, non-Hispanic
    B. Black or African-American, non-Hispanic
    C. Asian, Asian-American or Pacific Islander
    D. Hispanic, Latino, Spanish
    E. Native American or American Indian
    F. Other

5. What is the approximate student enrollment in your community college?

    A. Below 1,500
    B. 1,501-5,000
    C. 5,001-10,000
    D. 10,001-15,000
    E. 15,001-20,000
    F. Above 20,000

6. How long have you been in your current leadership position?

    A. 1-5 years
    B. 6-10 years
    C. 11 or more years

7. What path(s) did you follow to enter administration in higher education? Check all that apply.

    A. Instruction
    B. Student Services
    C. Administrative Services
    E. Corporate
    F. Not for profit
    G. Other

If you answered "Other" to question 7 above, please describe below.

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8. When you were a child, what career(s) did you dream of following? If you have more than one response, please list up to three choices in the order of preference.

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9. Was part of your childhood dream to be recognized for your accomplishments? For example, were the rewards going to be money, honor, self-esteem, adulation, or some combination of these?

    A. Yes
    B. No

10. Did you ever take "time out" emotionally or physically from your career for one or more of the following reasons? Select all choices that apply to your career.

    A. Birth of a child
    B. Adoption of a child
    C. Personal health issues
    D. Health issues of a family member
    E. Death of a spouse or other family member
    F. Divorce
    G. Elder care
    H. Other

If you answered "Other" to question 10, above, please describe below.

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11. Have you postponed moving to a different geographic location to take a new position because of one or more of the following reasons? Select all that apply.

    A. Didn't want to move young children
    B. Didn't want to move teenagers
    C. Spouse didn't want to move
    D. Spouse's career was more important than yours
    E. Elderly parents needed your care
    F. Other

    If you answered "Other" to question 11, please describe below.

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12. In your professional life have you ever experienced any of the following situations? Select all that apply to your professional life.

    A. Turned down a promotion because the "fit" wasn't right
    B. Interviewed for an internal position and weren't selected
    C. Interviewed for an external position and were turned down
    D. Made a lateral move
    E. Other

    If you answered "Other" to question 12 above, please describe below.

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13. After a career detour (any factor that pulls women away from their jobs physically or emotionally, any factor that pushes women temporarily to leave the job or workforce, or any other factor that prevents career advancement), how were you able "to get back on track" quickly? If applicable, please select all factors that enabled you to function again in a timely manner after a career detour.

    A. Had a plan B and maybe even a plan C
    B. Internal strength
    C. Support of family/friends
    D. Support of colleagues at work
    E. Other

If you answered "Other" to question 13 above, please describe below.

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14. As a way to "jump start" your career during a career stall, what activities did you consciously seek out? Select all answers that apply to your career.

    A. Shared experiences with other women who wanted to move up the career ladder
    B. Started working on an advanced degree
    C. Found a good mentor
    D. Began to do community service
    E. Started to network on a national level
    F. Learned to study the ramifications of decisions
    G. Prepared well for interviews
    H. Followed through on assignments
    I. Worked to improve listening skills
    J. Worked at understanding others' motives
    K. Began to put students first in all decisions
    L. Other

If you answered "Other" to question 14 above, please describe below.

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15. Women in executive leadership roles in community colleges rely on a variety of resources to help get back on track after a career detour. Which of the following resources helped you over a "stalled" time in your personal or professional life? Pick all responses that apply to your experience.

    A. Religious faith
    B. Other purpose (hobby, service organization, community service, etc.)
    C. Family support
    D. Support of college faculty and staff
    E. Support of college administrators
    F. Personal inner strength
    G. Good attitude
    H. A strong career plan
    I. Mentor
    J. National network of professional colleagues
    K. Other

If you answered "Other" to question 15 above, please describe below.

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16. Daniel Goleman (1988) states "…emotional intelligence seems to be largely learned, and it continues to develop as we go through life and learn from our experiences…." What emotional lessons did you learn from your career detour/interruption? Please select all responses that are closest to the way you would describe your experiences.

    A. Develop patience
    B. Stop to smell the roses because you only live once
    C. Know your core values
    D. Be flexible
    E. Be approachable by colleagues
    F. Keep focused
    G. Get over disappointments quickly
    H. Develop empathy for colleagues
    I. Recognize the accomplishment of others
    J. Learn to be grateful
    K. Other

If you answered "Other" to question 16 above, please describe below.

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17. What organizational lessons did you learn from your career detour? Please select all responses that reflect your personal experience.

    A. There are political/power issues in most colleges.
    B. Careful thought should be given as to what information is shared.
    C. Each college has its own tolerance for change.
    D. It's essential to build consensus before moving forward on an important decision.
    E. Internal relationships need to be strengthened
    F. People don't always have your best interests at heart.
    G. Other

If you answered "Other" to question 17 above, please describe below.

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18. What advice would you give to a young woman who expresses the desire to move
    into community college administration? Please check all responses that reflect
    your personal experience.

    A. Stay focused on career goals
    B. Learn from your mistakes
    C. Don't have hidden agendas.
    D. Be yourself
    E. Know your capabilities
    F. Find additional interests other than your job
    G. Use emotional intelligence when dealing with others
    H. Keep yourself marketable
    I. Be proactive about your career and accomplishments
    J. Take on additional roles at the college to expand field of experience
    K. Other

    If you answered "Other" to question 18 above, please describe below.

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19. On your career ladder as a community college leader, have you ever felt that
    decisions about your professional future were influenced by one or more of the
    following situations? If so, please choose all responses that are most appropriate
    to your own personal experience.

    A. Perception that a woman couldn't do the job
    B. Lack of internal support for a promotion
    C. Failure to completely understand the informal "power structure" within the
       college
    D. Other

    If you answered "Other" to question 19 above, please describe below.

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20. Carol Gallagher (2000) notes, "Endurance has a lot to do with success." This author goes on to talk about "…emotional endurance—your ability to hold your own, to understand yourself and your emotions well enough so that you can successfully handle difficult situations as they arrive." Do you think older women in executive leadership positions have developed more emotional endurance and are better able to handle career detours/barriers than younger women?

    A. Agree
    B. Disagree

21. If you agree that older women in executive leadership positions have more emotional endurance than younger women, please mark all appropriate responses that explain why you think they are better at handling career detours/stalls than younger women.

    A. After on-the-job experience, women learn how to maneuver through the "system."
    B. There is the knowledge/belief that the "right" thing will happen.
    C. The older a woman gets, the more she knows about herself and her values, so she realizes the lasting impact of her decisions.
    D. With maturity, women, as well as men, realize that "living to work" isn't emotionally or physically healthy.
    E. Other

If you answered "Other" to question 21 above, please describe below.

22. Older women with a wealth of leadership experience in the community college tend to be inflexible and don't really recover as rapidly from career stalls as younger women.

    A. Agree
    B. Disagree

23. Once a woman has endured one or more personal/professional storms, she develops more self-confidence.

    A. Agree
    B. Disagree

24. Women in administrative roles rebound from career stalls brought on by either personal or professional issues just as quickly as men who hold the same positions.

    A. Agree
    B. Disagree

25. Many women in community college leadership positions perceive that men in the same leadership roles do not seem to have as many career detours/stalls as women.

    A. Agree
    B. Disagree

26. In your opinion, what perceptions do community college women leaders hold about men in equal positions being able to weather career detours/stalls better than women. Please mark all responses that apply.

    A. A majority of leadership positions are still held by men.
    B. Because men in executive leadership positions seem to understand the importance of networking more than women in the same positions, they have a built-in support group.
    C. Women in executive leadership positions in community colleges do not always support other women.
    D. Community college administrators are more forgiving of men than women.
    E. Women leaders in community colleges seem to be under the microscope more than men in the same position.
    F. Other

    If you answered "Other" to question 26 above, please describe in the box below.

27. Although there are probably many sources for career stalls/detours in community colleges, why do you think they are not as damaging to a woman's career as career detours in the corporate sector might be? Please mark all responses that apply.

    A. More understanding and tolerance from administration
    B. More options in choice of career path than in corporate sector
    C. Women are accepted as leaders more readily in community colleges than in\ four-year colleges and universities or the corporate sector.
    D. The number of women leaders in community college will continue to grow as current leaders get ready to retire within the next five to seven years.
    E. Other

If you answered "Other" to question 27 above, please describe in the box below.

28. When women in community colleges want to move up the organizational ladder into leadership positions, it is usually important to get a terminal degree (PhD or Ed.D.). What path did you take to get the advanced degree you needed to move up the career ladder. Please mark all that apply.

   A. Worked full time and went to graduate school on a part time basis.
   B. Pursued a fully online degree while working full time.
   C. Too time off to pursue an online degree
   D. Took extended leave from work to complete degree requirements.
   E. Took a short educational leave to complete degree work.
   F. Pursued a partially online degree paired with face-to-face classes.
   G. Other

   If you answered "Other" to question 28 above, please describe below.

29. How well were you able to follow your career path plan to become a community college president/vice president?

   A. Kept to the plan and on original time line
   B. Did not advance strictly according to plan and time line but did achieve goal to become president/vice president
   C. Didn't really have a plan—just took advantage of opportunities as they came along
   D. Other

   If you answered "Other" to question 29 above, please describe below.

30. When did you make the conscious decision to become an executive leader at a community college?

    A. As an undergraduate student
    B. As a graduate student
    C. As a community college instructor
    D. As a staff employee of a community college
    E. As a mid-level community college administrator (department chair, manager, dean)
    F. As an administrator/supervisor in the corporate sector
    G. As an administrator/supervisor in the not for profit sector
    H. Other

If you answered "Other" to question 30 above, please describe below.

31. Which of the following phrases best describes your attitude toward life in general? Please mark all that apply.

    A. There's a light at the end of the tunnel.
    B. Sacrifices are usually temporary.
    C. Time takes care of many things.
    D. Sometimes goals need to be abandoned or readjusted.
    E. Don't cry over spilled milk.
    F. Take on one challenge at a time.
    G. Continually look for something new rather than some place that's new
    H. Other

If you answered "Other" to question 31 above, please describe below.

Thank you for your input