12-2010

A Study of Presidential Derailment in Community Colleges

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To the Graduate Council:

I am submitting herewith a dissertation written by Leigh Anne Touzeau entitled "A Study of Presidential Derailment in Community Colleges." I have examined the final electronic copy of this dissertation for form and content and recommend that it be accepted in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy, with a major in Education.

<div align="right">Dr. E. Grady Bogue, Major Professor</div>

We have read this dissertation and recommend its acceptance:

Dr. Tricia McClam, Dr. Robert Cunningham, Dr. Norma Mertz

<div align="right">Accepted for the Council:

Carolyn R. Hodges

Vice Provost and Dean of the Graduate School</div>

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A STUDY OF PRESIDENTIAL DERAILMENT
IN COMMUNITY COLLEGES

A Dissertation Presented for
the Doctor of Philosophy Degree
The University of Tennessee, Knoxville

Leigh Anne Touzeau
December 2010

DEDICATION

To my husband, Tom, my son, Dan, and my daughter, Maddie: you supported me throughout my educational journey, surrendering family time to allow me to complete this project. To my mom and dad, thank you for believing in me even when I did not believe in myself. To my wonderful sister, Laura, you helped me raise my children when I could not be there. I am forever grateful. I love all of you beyond words.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

ABSTRACT

The purpose of this interpretive, multiple case study was to explore factors associated with presidential derailments in community colleges. For this study presidential derailment was defined as a community college president leaving the institution non-voluntarily, within five years of being hired. The case studies involved interviews, document analysis, and observation. The population consisted of four community colleges in the United States. These distinctly different institutions produced data for the investigation.

The findings revealed five derailment themes among the four cases. These were: problems with interpersonal relationships, failure of the president to adapt to the institutional culture, difficulty working with key constituencies, failure to communicate, and a flawed search process. Two of the five themes from community colleges related directly to Leslie and Van Velsor's (1996) derailment themes from the corporate sector. These were: problems with interpersonal relationships, and the inability to change or adapt to the culture of an organization during a transition (failure to adapt to the institutional culture).

Finally, implications for preventing presidential derailments and for improvement in the presidential selection process are also presented.

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CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION TO THE STUDY

Background of the Study

Effective leadership is central to any organization and to institutions of higher education. Research has shown that leaders are important to the organizations in which they serve and that they do make a difference in the performance of the organization (Bass, 2008; Finkelstein & Hambrick, 1990, 1996; Hogan, Curphy, & Hogan, 1994; Judge, 1999; Zaccaro, 1996). The impact of leaders suggests that executives who derail can be a major detriment to the organization and can be a factor in waning institutional performance (Leslie & Van Velsor, 1996).   In fact, leadership derailment research was originally conducted with the purpose of helping businesses avoid costly leadership turnover and creating more effective leadership training curricula.

A derailed executive or manager is defined as one that either "leaves the organization nonvoluntarily. . . or is plateaued as a result of a perceived lack of fit between personal characteristics and skills and the demands of the job" (Leslie & Van Velsor, 1996, p. 1). To qualify as a presidential derailment for this study, the president of the community college had to leave, not of his/her choosing, within five years of being hired.

In corporate organizations, a number of issues have been found to be associated with executive derailment: difficulty with interpersonal relationships (Lombardo & McCauley, 1988), failure to meet business objectives (Morrison, White, & Van Velsor, 1987), an inability to build and lead a team (Kaplan, Drath & Kofodimos, 1991), and an

inability to change or adapt during a transition (Kaplan, Drath & Kofodimos, 1991). In some cases, skills and talents that were seen by supervisors as early-career strengths and prompted the supervisors to "fast track" an employee toward an executive level position, later surfaced as weaknesses and caused the derailment of the employee on his journey to an executive level position (McCall & Lombardo, 1983).

Much of what is currently known about executive derailment centers on the for-profit business sector and on the employees who are currently in a managerial position and on track to achieving the top executive level position (McCall & Lombardo, 1983; Lombardo & McCauley, 1988; Van Velsor & Leslie, 1995; Leslie & Van Velsor, 1996; Hollenbeck & McCall, 2001). Over the course of approximately twenty-five years the Center for Creative Leadership has been conducting research that focuses on the manager who is moving up through the ranks but for some reason 'derails' (leaves non-voluntarily or plateaus).

Limited research on executive derailment in the non-profit field has been conducted. In fact, Tropman and Shaefer (2004) state that the non-profit field is new to (derailment) research (p. 163). One of the purposes of their research was "to open a dialogue on the subject and expand the field of 'derailment' research" (p. 163). While this research may be useful in making distinctions among degrees of executive wrongdoing, such work does not illuminate the factors associated with executive derailment in non-profit settings.

Within the specific context of higher education, we know even less about presidential derailment (Bogue, 1994). In fact, the only research established that addresses derailment within any type of educational setting speaks only to K-12

superintendents (Calabrese & Roberts, 2001). As Calabrese and Roberts (2001) state, "Derailment, although an issue in the private sector, is paid scant attention in the education sector" (p. 267). They suggest that the cause of leadership derailment within school superintendents "is found in the individual character flaws of the school leader, not in the university training or the context within which the school leader operates" (p. 274).

While arguing that there exists a void of derailment research within higher education settings, Bogue (1994) suggests that the factors associated with presidential derailments in higher education may correspond to the "character flaws" analysis offered of superintendents by Calabrese and Roberts (2001).   In citing a number of articles that focus on improper behaviors or ineffective skill sets as derailing factors, Bogue speculated that derailment research carried out within the higher education enterprise might expose a theme of 'absent integrity'. He states, "Strangely missing from the research cited by the Center for Creative Leadership is any mention of those leaders who derailed their careers because they abandoned their integrity" (p. 7).

"In issue after issue of the *Chronicle of Higher Education*, we read of another troubled presidency, another leader worn down or driven out, in distress or under fire" (Hahn, 1995, p. 1). There is, on average, a 30% turnover of community college presidents every two years: Approximately one quarter to one-third of all community college presidents are in some stage of leaving or thinking of leaving, voluntarily or involuntarily, during a two-year period (Weisman & Vaughn 2007).

Gentry, Mondore, & Cox, (2007) argue that presidential turnover, including derailments, for any institution is a financially costly event. It is important to examine

the reasons why some of these presidents derail, because understanding the factors that are associated with presidential derailment will provide governing boards with information into possible problematic characteristics of presidential prospects.

Research asserts that college presidents make a difference in the lives of their institutions in both substantive ways (e.g., directing the strategic path of the institution over the course of years) and symbolic ways (e.g., creating institutional meaning through speeches and appearances) (Birnbaum, 1992). Additionally, Neumann and Neumann (1999) reported that presidential leadership style can impact both enrollment growth and endowment yield. Currently, little is known about the factors associated with presidential derailments in higher education and understanding this phenomenon more fully will add to the knowledge base and assist board of directors, regents, and trustees as they search for and hire community college presidents.

Much of what we know about derailment pertains to the manager who has derailed on his or her way to the top position. Since no substantial research has been completed on top executives that have derailed, one is left to wonder if the same themes reported for ascending managers would provide derailment explanations for the top executives. This study will add to the corporate research on derailment and expand our knowledge of executive derailment in educational institutions.

Despite more than 25 years of derailment research in the for-profit arena, there remains little to no research focused on executive derailment in non-profit organizations (Tropman and Shaefer, 2004). We have no evidence that the themes related to executive derailment in the for-profit sector are generalizable to the nonprofit arena. Finally, and specific to the present study, there has been no research on derailment in higher

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education, as a specific nonprofit sector, or on the concept of presidential derailment (Bogue, 1994).

While we know that the higher education president is important (Birnbaum, 1992; Neumann and Neumann, 1999) and turnover in the presidency is costly to the institution (Glick, 2002), we know very little about the factors associated with presidential derailments in higher education.

Statement of the Problem

It is important to determine executive derailment factors within a higher education setting. Presidential derailments can be costly to the institution in financial terms as well as the effect they have on employee morale and public relations (Bornstein, 2003; Bogue 1994). Unfortunately, little derailment research has been conducted outside the for-profit sector (Tropman & Shaefer, 2004). Even less research is found on the leadership pitfalls facing today's college presidents (Bensimon, Neumann, & Birnbaum, 1989). An exploratory look into the factors associated with presidential derailment is needed in order to fill a void in contemporary higher education research.

Purpose of the Study and Research Questions

The purpose of the study is to describe the factors associated with presidential derailments at selected community colleges. The research questions guiding the study are the following:

1. What were the factors that led to the derailment of the community college president?

2. What events were associated with or influenced the derailment of the president?

3. What is the relationship, if any, between the Center for Creative Leadership

factors and those found in this study?

Conceptual Framework

Derailment research findings from the 1980s, 1990s, and across cultures indicates

that there are four "enduring derailment themes," (Leslie & Van Velsor, 1996, p. 16).

These themes are; Problems with Interpersonal Relationships, Failure to Meet Business

Objectives, Inability to Build and Lead a Team, and Inability to Change or Adapt During

a Transition. These themes are discussed in greater detail in Chapter II.

While these themes do not constitute a prescribed theory of derailment, they do

provide a general framework of what is known about the issues related to derailment in

the for-profit enterprise. Given the lack of research related to derailment outside the for-

profit enterprise, a probing illustrative study of the phenomena is most suitable. Using

these themes, this study aims to explore the factors associated with presidential

derailments at community colleges.

Significance of the Study

The study will begin to build a literature on presidential derailment in community

college settings that does not currently exist. Currently, little is known about the factors

associated with presidential derailments in higher education and understanding this

phenomenon more fully will add to the knowledge base and assist board of directors,

regents, and trustees as they search for and hire presidents. Since presidential turnover is

costly to institutions (Glick, 2002), understanding the factors that cause presidential

derailments will provide governing boards with information into possible problematic characteristics of presidential prospects. Also, this study may be able to help aspiring community college presidents by adding to their knowledge of what issues are associated with presidential derailment.

Previous derailment research has focused on managers on their way to the top position in the organization (Van Velsor & Leslie, 1995). The present study will expand this research to include derailment at the top level of the institution. This study will expand the existing research on derailment.

<div align="center">**Limitations of the Study**</div>

The study is limited in two ways. First, since the study seeks an in-depth understanding of the factors associated with presidential derailments in community colleges, the number of institutions to be studied (breadth) was limited. Second, since the study involves asking questions about a sensitive event (presidential derailment) it was hoped that participants would be informative and cooperative in their interviews and would give open and honest answers to the interview questions. Because of the sensitive nature of the questions, the participants may be reluctant to give the most open and honest answers, but instead give answers intended to protect the institution they serve. This would limit the study because the real reasons for derailment or the president's role in the derailment may be kept from the researcher only giving her a glimpse of the truth.

Delimitations of the Study

Participation in the study was delimited to a convenience sample of four community colleges. It is hoped that with the qualitative methods used in this study the findings will be rich with details for understanding presidential derailment in community colleges however the findings will be applicable only to these four settings, and may not apply to other community colleges.

Definitions

For the purposes of this study it is important to understand what specific terms mean. In this study *community colleges* was defined as public two-year institutions of higher education, that offer levels of instruction adapted to the needs of the community. Program offerings usually include a transfer curriculum (credits toward a bachelor's degree) and occupational programs (two-year course of study designed to prepare students for employment) (AACC, 1999). Also, as stated earlier, to qualify as a presidential *derailment* for this study, *derailment* was defined as a community college president leaving the institution non-voluntarily within five years of being hired.

Organization of the Study

The study is organized into five chapters. Chapter I introduces the study and includes the statement of the problem and the research questions, it also includes the purpose of the study, the significance of the study, and the limitations and delimitations of the study. In Chapter II, the relevant literature on higher education leadership and derailment is reviewed. Chapter III details the methods and procedures used in the study including the research design, the site and population, procedures followed, data collection, data analysis processes, and issues of validity and reliability. Chapter IV

provides the specific findings of the study related to the research questions. The final

chapter, Chapter V, presents the summary and discussion of the findings in relation to the

literature review in Chapter II, conclusions, and recommendations for future research.

CHAPTER II

REVIEW OF THE LITERATURE

Introduction

The purpose of this study was to describe the factors associated with presidential derailments at community colleges. This chapter provides a review of the relevant literature and is divided into five sections. First, a general review of the relevant literature related to leadership effectiveness is examined. Second is an examination of ineffective leadership. Third, executive derailment in the business sector is discussed. Fourth, the literature on derailment within the non-profit sector is examined. The fifth section describes the conceptual framework that is used for this study. Finally, a summary of the chapter is presented that highlights the relevant literature and addresses the gaps in the research related to presidential derailment in higher education.

Leadership Effectiveness

Despite the breadth of literature related to leadership effectiveness, some leaders still fail to prosper. Examining the literature on leadership effectiveness is crucial to the study of executive derailment in a broader context. What determines a leader's effectiveness is one of the most researched topics in business and leadership literature (Bass, 2008; Hogan, Curphy, & Hogan, 1994). Four factors which are often used to measure leadership effectiveness are: characteristics, behaviors, values, and performance measurements.

Among the works that focus on the characteristics and behaviors of effective leaders is Peter Drucker's very popular, *The Effective Executive*. In it, Drucker stated that the effective executive knows how his or her time is spent, focuses on results, builds on strengths, concentrates on a few goals, and makes effective decisions (1996, pp. 23-24). Boal and Hooijberg (2001) state that effective leadership is comprised of three factors: absorptive capacity, which is defined as the ability to learn and apply new material or findings; adaptive capacity which is defined as the ability to change due to context; and, managerial wisdom, which is defined as maintaining a discerning and intuitive perspective in varying conditions.

In addition, Jim Collins, in his book *Good to Great*, found that the best companies, the 'great' companies had great leaders. Collins conducted a thorough, comparative study of twenty-eight Fortune 500 companies over a fifteen-year span (Collins, 2001). As a result of this research, Collins determined that the eleven companies that made transformational strides in their respective industry were led by executives that hired the right people and set forth the vision for the company. Collins went on to say that "great vision without great people is irrelevant" (p. 42). 'Level 5' leaders are described as having the paradoxical blend of personal humility and professional will. They are also timid and ferocious, shy and fearless and modest with a fierce, unwavering commitment to high standards (Collins, 2001).

Also focusing on the behaviors of effective leaders, Kouzes and Posner (1995) devised a personal best leadership survey consisting of thirty-eight open-ended questions such as: How were you prepared for this experience; what special techniques and strategies did you use to get other people involved in the project; and what did you learn

about leadership from this experience? From an analysis of the personal-best cases, they developed a model of leadership that consists of what Kouzes and Posner call The Five Practices of Exemplary Leadership (1995). The practices include: model the way, inspire a shared vision, challenge the process, enable others to act, and encourage the heart. These findings then led them to the development of the Leadership Practices Inventory, which measures the practices found in their early research.

Another measure of effective leadership is the use of performance measurements. Performance measurements assess the degree to which a leader is meeting his or her job requirements, as well as the goals and mission of the institution. Effective leaders have two dimensions of responsibility: directional and operational (Gardner & Schermerhorn, 1992). A leader's directional responsibility requires that he or she create and communicate an inspirational and unifying vision and purpose for the organization (Gardner & Schermerhorn, 1992). A leader's operational responsibility requires that the leader be able to give direction and management to the day-to-day tasks of the organization (Gardner & Schermerhorn, 1992). Gardner & Schermerhorn's (1992) discussion of responsibility is important as it explains the comprehensive nature of an executive's responsibility. Leaders are responsible for both creating and implementing the organization's mission and objectives. Barnard (1938) agrees that an executive should be evaluated by achieving the stated objectives.

Leadership effectiveness is central to the topic of this study. It is important to explore what is meant by an effective leader before examining the factors related to derailment. To delve further into the concept of leadership effectiveness as it relates to

the present study, it is also necessary to explore leadership effectiveness in the higher education arena.

Effective leadership in higher education is important to sustaining and creating successful and healthy institutions. In his book *The Community College President*, George Vaughan (2006) reported his findings of the Career and Lifestyles survey of 591 community college presidents. The survey reported demographic data, opinions and attitudes of presidents, their spouses, their colleagues, and their boards of trustees (1986). Vaughan also reported on the findings of the Leadership Survey of 75 'successful' community college presidents from across the country. The survey asked leaders to rate the personal attributes, skills, and abilities required of the successful president. The attributes receiving the highest ratings were integrity, good judgment, courage, and concern for others.

In the 1986 book *Searching for Academic Excellence* Gilley, Fulmer, and Reithlingshoefer identified characteristics in the presidents of what they deem to be 'excellent institutions'. They reported that the leaders of these institutions liked one-on-one contact with people deep in the organization and are not likely to be confined by organizational charts. They created a noticeable presence on the campus and model "management by walking about." These presidents were further described as 'conservative gamblers', willing to work out front but were mindful to take every measure to reduce risk. They created feelings of support and trust. Finally, they found that effective presidents were described as men and women with an individual, thoughtful, and caring touch by their faculty and staff (1986).

In *The Effective Administrator,* Donald Walker (1979) compares the behaviors of effective administrators with the behaviors of ineffective administrators. Table 1 summarizes Walker's findings.

Table 1
Behaviors of Effective and Ineffective Administrators
(Adapted from Walker, *The Effective Administrator*, 1979)

Effective Administrators	Ineffective Administrators
Little focus on position and power	Obsessed with position and power
View role as one of integrating ideas	Consider critics as enemies
See the institution in a healthy political context and do not make enemies out of dissenters.	View their role as one of having to make unpopular decisions and are occupied with idleness and apathy

In *The Effective College President*, Fisher, et al. (1988) asserted that there was a problem in higher education with ineffective presidential leadership and that effective presidents were critical to ensuring that higher education was to have a thriving future in the educational landscape. Fisher, et al. (1988) conducted a study wherein they asked 485 people who were considered to be experts on higher education to submit the names of five people whom they considered to be the most effective college presidents. Two hundred and twenty-two experts responded and identified 412 effective presidents out of a possible 3,300 presidents. Then the researchers asked the 412 effective presidents along with a random sample of representative presidents to complete a 15-minute questionnaire called The Fisher/ Tack Effective Leadership Inventory. After the initial survey was distributed, the researchers conducted in-depth interviews with 18 of the people who were identified to be effective presidents in an effort to produce a comprehensive view of effective leadership in higher education. Fisher, et al. (1988)

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found the presidents who were identified as effective were different from those presidents in the representative sample.

Fisher, et al. (1988) found several characteristics which the effective presidents had in common. Effective presidents were found to be less collegial and more distant, less spontaneous with their speech and actions, more confident, more inclined to take calculated risks, and more committed to an ideal or a vision rather than to an institution, more inclined to rely on gaining respect than on being liked among others (Fisher, et al., 1988). Effective presidents were found to be "strong, action-oriented visionaries who acted out of a kind of educated intuition" (Fisher, et al., 1988, p. ix). Fisher, et al. (1988) likened these effective presidents to be more like their peers within the business sector.

Building on the literature related to effective leadership, Fisher (1988) developed a list of characteristics that constituted an effective president. Effective collegiate leadership requires a leader who:

- Possesses a vision. Leaders must have some creative ideas about where their organization should be going and be able to communicate that vision to people;

- Enjoys a high level of energy. Presidents must be willing to endure and enjoy the long hours that come with being a college president; visibility, presidents need to be seen around the university, the community and the state for which they work;

- Relates well to others. Effective leaders must be able to work well with a diverse constituency;

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- Promotes respect and admiration. They understand the importance of respecting themselves, the position and other people;

- Possesses the willingness to be bold decision makers. These presidents possess courage and conviction and will not shy away from making bold decisions if needed;

- Utilizes power well. Effective leaders must be comfortable with exercising power; possess a positive self-image, leaders must believe in themselves and their ability to perform well;

- Displays a trusting attitude and develops trustworthiness. Leaders must exhibit integrity and be able to trust their constituents;

- Enjoys a sense of humor. Leaders must be able to portray a sense of optimism;

- Considers shared governance to be crucial, however, they also understand the importance of being the leader, they have to understand the politics involved in leadership and possess the ability to negotiate;

- Believes in the underlying goals of the organization, must understand the importance of the institution and its mission as well as the process of the academy; the organization is the leader, the leader is the critical determinant of success or failure within the organization (Fisher, et al., 1988).

Bogue (1994), in *Leadership by Design*, presented ten measures of collegiate leadership effectiveness:

- Willingness to build long-term relationships and goals to achieve desired outcomes;

- Fulfillment of the goals and mission of the university;

- Creation of an organizational environment that promotes integrity;

- Improvement of campus diversity;

- Satisfaction of various constituents;

- Commitment of providing opportunities for the growth and development of one's colleagues and staff;

- Awareness and appreciation of the cultural, political, and economic climate of the institution;

- Personal growth and learning from one's own leadership mistakes;

- Personal reflection of the leader which requires that the leader examine his/her own conscience; and

- Commitment to ethical behavior and preservation of personal integrity.

Constituent satisfaction is one of the measures of presidential effectiveness (Bogue, 1994; Bornstein, 2003). Presidents have the challenge of meeting the needs and desires of many varied constituents. Actually, Bogue (1994) said the responsibility to multiple stakeholders was one of the unique factors of higher education leadership. Each stakeholder will judge the effectiveness of the president (Bogue, 1994; Benismon, Neumann, & Birnbaum 1989). The president must be aware of each of these constituents when making a decision or enacting some type of change.

There are several constituencies with which a college president has to work: students, staff, faculty, governing boards; political officials, and the community at large.

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Governing boards or boards of trustees are an important constituency to all presidents because they will determine whether or not the president remains employed. Michael, Schwartz, and Balraj (2001) surveyed trustees and presidents to identify factors that trustees perceive to associate with presidential effectiveness. From their research came a list of four indicators: knowledge of the higher education culture and context, and influence that helps to attract resources, a healthy relationship with the board chairperson and faculty, and effective management skills, such as level of academic leadership, vision of a long-term plan, knowledge of budget, and the overall management of the institution (Michael, Schwartz, Balraj 2001).

Bornstein (2003) believes that college leaders must not only be effective leaders, but also develop legitimacy (trust) within their presidency. Bornstein (2003) conducted in-depth interviews with thirteen sitting and retired presidents to study how presidents establish legitimacy. Surveys were also sent out to 377 randomly selected presidents in an effort to develop a broader insight. Based on her research, Bornstein (2003) established an analytical construct of the factors to establishing legitimacy as a president:

- Individual – incumbent's personal background (career paths and identity characteristics);
- Institutional – the internal structural and cultural context (presidential selection and transition processes, governance, tradition, and norms);
- Environmental – external context (economy, tax laws, funding, enrollment patterns, community issues);

- Technical – perceived effectiveness (vision, strategic planning, management, budgeting, fund-raising, lobbying, academic and civic leadership;

- Moral – ethical decision making, selfless devotion, and service to the mission and values of the institution (p. 25).

Legitimacy is established with a variety of stakeholders. Legitimacy is threatened by six factors: lack of cultural fit, management incompetence, misconduct, loss of social capital, inattentiveness, and grandiose behaviors. Bornstein (2003) said that "without legitimacy, a presidency is doomed" (p. xi). As such it is important for administrators to understand how these factors will be used to determine their effectiveness and in turn, their legitimacy.

Higher education leaders have the challenge of meeting the needs and desires of several different constituencies. Each constituency will judge the effectiveness of the president (Bogue, 1994; Benismon, Neumann, & Birnbaum, 1989). Bornstein (2003) illuminated the idea that the constituents can have different perspectives on the effectiveness of a president and that often times faculty were the most difficult within which to establish legitimacy. Six main constituencies of a president emerge: the students, the staff, the faculty, the governing board, political officials, and the public. Again, each of these stakeholders will at some point gauge the effectiveness of the president and the president must be cognizant of each party when making decisions. In essence, community college presidents need to be all things to all people.

In both the for-profit literature and the literature related specifically to higher education, the connection between ethics and leadership effectiveness has been a widely

explored topic (Barnard, 1938; Boatright, 1988; Mortensen, et al., 1989; Morgan, 1993). Leaders are expected to set the ethical atmosphere of an organization as well as exhibit strong moral character (Barnard, 1938; Hitt, 1990). Hitt (1990) stated, "Ethics and leadership go hand-in-hand. An ethical environment is conducive to effective leadership, and effective leadership is conducive to ethics" (p. 1).

Leadership scholar Joanne Ciulla (2004) explores the relationship of effectiveness and ethical character. She suggests that effectiveness has both a moral and a technical dimension. A leader may be unethical but effective in achieving goals, or he/she may be ethical but ineffective in achieving goals. It should also be added that a leader may be very effective in achieving unworthy or destructive goals. There are four dimensions on which one can measure the ethics of leadership:

1. The ethics of a leader as a person, which includes things like self-knowledge, discipline, and intentions;

2. The ethics of the leader/follower relationship (i.e., how they treat each other);

3. The ethics of the process of leadership (i.e., command and control, participatory);

4. The ethics of what the leader does or does not do (Ciulla, 2004, p. 326).

Ethics is an important aspect of any leader's position. In a study conducted by Mortensen, et al. (1989), managers "rated ethical matters as a 'moderate' to 'somewhat major' part of the job" (p. 256). Barach & Eckhardt (1996) asserted that "personal integrity is a vital character trait of any effective leader" (p.84). Ethical behavior has been found to elevate a leader's position in the eyes of a subordinate and helps to

establish credibility (Morgan, 1993). Moral leaders are also instrumental in inspiring people (Costa, 1998; Hitt, 1990; Barach & Eckhardt, 1996).

The adherence to ethical values is a very important aspect of leadership effectiveness especially as it relates to a leader's credibility. Bornstein (2003) studied how presidents gain legitimacy throughout their presidential tenure. One of the five factors in developing legitimacy as a president is acting with moral intentions (Bornstein, 2003). Included in the moral factor are ethical decision making, selfless devotion, and service to the mission and values of the institution (Bornstein, 2003). One major threat to legitimacy that Bornstein noted was misconduct. She perceived college and university presidents as having "a greater moral responsibility because they serve as role models for students and citizens" (Bornstein, 2003, p. 49).

Kerr (1989) developed a list entitled the "Ten Commandments of Executive Integrity." Those include:

- Tell the truth,

- Obey the law,

- Reduce ambiguity,

- Show concern for others,

- Accept responsibility for the growth and nurturing of subordinates,

- Practice participation, not paternalism,

- Provide freedom from corrupting influence,

- Always act,

- Provide consistency across cases, and

- Provide consistency between values and actions (Kerr, 1988, p. 126-127).

Kerr points out these "ten commandments" are the ideal for leaders to act with integrity, but points out that sometimes the ideal is difficult to master in everyday practice. While it is imperative that society holds leaders to a high ethical standard, it is also important to do so with a balance that encourages morally responsible behavior without placing unfair and unrealistic standards on them.

Leadership scholars often espouse the need for ethical behavior among leaders; however, leaders still encounter ethical dilemmas and in some cases, fail to successfully travel through the ethical challenges. Leaders fail for a variety of reasons. The Center for Creative Leadership (CCL) has been studying the failures of business leaders since the 1980s. In the next section, the existing literature on the idea of executive derailment within the for-profit business sector will be explored.

These studies examined the scholarship concerning leadership effectiveness in collegiate settings. Having the knowledge of what is considered effective leadership within the higher education community will help to provide a contrast to the actions of the derailed presidents that will be studied. Possessing an understanding of the notion of effective leadership in higher education is critical to this study. Leadership effectiveness can be evaluated on many measures and outcomes as indicated by the literature reviewed. However, to begin looking at derailment within higher education it is also necessary to examine the literature of ineffective leadership.

Ineffective Leadership

Reviewing literature on ineffective leadership is important to see if similarities exist in the behaviors of the derailed presidents featured in this study. Ineffective leadership is a key concern for organizations (Bass, 2008; Hogan, Curphy, & Hogan, 1994). DeVries (1992) reviewed the executive selection process in North America from 1960 to present and found the failure rate of executives has been around 50%. "Bad leadership degrades the quality of life for everyone associated with it" (Hogan & Kaiser, 2005 p.169). Furthermore, ineffective leaders cause organizational objectives to go unmet, they can also cause psychological harm to employees and other constituencies (Hogan & Kaiser, 2005).

Judge (1999) conducted a mixed methods study on executives to explore the character of those that lead for-profit organizations. A survey was administered to Chief Executive Officers (CEOs) in major companies within the southeastern United States. Eighty-two surveys were completed and included in the sample. In-depth interviews were also conducted with seven of the CEOs. In addition to exploring the character of the executives, Judge also evaluated failed leadership and offered four reasons why executives fail: the leader did not articulate a vision of a strategic plan for the organization; the leader did not understand the different interests of their main constituencies; the leader did not prioritize goals; and the leader failed to demonstrate ethical behavior for the organization. Bass (2008) argued that "executives fail when they become too involved in personal interests and not enough in their constituent's and organization's interests" (p. 690). Levinson (1988) reasoned that executives failed because they concentrated on short term results and were unconcerned with the emotional

well-being of their employees and customers. Ineffective leaders also led inflexible organizations that were unable to adapt when faced with situations that called for change (Levinson, 1988).

Executives are also ineffective because of personal and psychological issues. Kets de Vries (1989) examined executive ineffectiveness by studying media accounts of failed leadership. He asserted that some executives become ineffective due to psychological forces. He found that ineffective executives were more likely to isolate themselves from reality and keep themselves at a distance from their subordinates, thus being perceived as aloof, distant, and unapproachable by subordinates. Ineffective leadership is manifested in some executives as a fear of success which causes them to become anxious, deprecate their previous accomplishments, and engage in self-destructive behavior (Kets de Vries, 1989).

Hogan and Hogan (2001) examined the literature on executive derailments and produced a taxonomy of derailment factors. The researchers also developed an inventory, the Hogan Development Survey (HDS), to assess the potential for derailments in executives. The DSM-IV from the American Psychiatric Association was used to correlate 11 typical derailment behaviors as evidenced in the literature review to personality disorders. Personality disorders are "dysfunctional dispositions that may or may not be associated with anxiety and depression…but which are associated with poor social and occupational performance" (p. 41). Hogan and Hogan asserted that leaders have both a "bright side" and a "dark side" to their personalities. The "dark side" tendencies are often hard to detect in the initial interview stage of executives because they "coexist with well-developed social skills that mask or compensate for them in the

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short run" (Hogan & Kaiser, 2005). The "dark side" tendencies manifest themselves only after a leader has been in the position long enough to let their guard down and are often noticed by subordinates first because ineffective managers typically let their guard down around staff (Hogan & Hogan, 2001). The dark side tendencies include: *excitable*, tendency toward moodiness, being hard to please; *skeptical*, displayed by acting cynical or doubting others' true intentions; *cautious*, reluctant to take risks for fear of negative criticism; *reserved*, aloof, detached, and uncommunicative behavior; *leisurely*, independent and ignoring people's requests; *bold*, unusually self confident, feelings of grandeur; *mischievous*, manipulative, cunning and deceitful behavior; *colorful*, needing to be the center of attention; *imaginative*, acting and thinking in sometimes odd ways; *diligent*, perfectionist tendencies, critical of others, and inflexible about rules; and *dutiful*, eager to please and reluctant to go against popular opinion.

Ineffective leadership may be associated with an executive's actions or his or her psychological factors or a combination of both. The results of ineffective leadership are varied depending on the magnitude of the ineffectiveness, but range from the maintenance of status quo to the derailment, or firing, of the executive. The literature on executive derailment will now be examined.

Executive Derailment in the For-Profit Business Sector

Leadership failure is unfortunately becoming an increasingly common occurrence in all sectors throughout the world. Central to the idea of effective leadership is the concept of leadership derailment. Several studies have focused on derailment in the for-profit sector, with a specific focus on the characteristics and behaviors of the failed leaders (Bentz, 1985; McCall & Lombardo, 1983; Lombardo, Ruderman, & McCauley,

1988; Morrison, White, & Van Velsor, 1987; Van Velsor & Leslie, 1995; Leslie & Van Velso, 1996). In the early 80's, the Center for Creative Leadership (CCL) began studying derailment in businesses and has continued to develop and expand that body of literature. The CCL conducted research on leadership derailment in an attempt to provide executives with information on why some managers are effective and others ineffective, often leading to derailment (Van Velsor & Leslie, 1995). Leadership derailment is defined as a leader that either "leaves the organization nonvoluntarily…or is plateaued as a result of a perceived lack of fit between personal characteristics and skills and the demands of the job" (Leslie & Van Velsor, 1996, p. 1). A derailed executive has been a person who was very successful in the beginning of his or her career and when they moved into more responsible positions were unable to succeed because any early strength became a weakness or some early weaknesses began to matter (McCall & Lombardo, 1983; Leslie & Van Velsor, 1996).

The earliest derailment research, published by McCall and Lombardo in 1983, was based on a set of interviews with senior executives in three U.S. industrial organizations. Executives who had made it to the top of their organizations were asked to think of two managers that they knew well; one who had risen to the top of his/her organization and one who had been seen as having senior management potential but failed to make it to the top of the organization. The interviews yielded a total of 40 case studies, 20 focusing on success and 20 dealing with derailment.

The data revealed that successful executives were highly promising early in their careers, had exceptional track records, seen as very bright and ambitious and made sacrifices. Executives who derailed also had a number of successes early on and were

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seen as technically savvy or tenacious problem-solvers. Yet as they moved up in their organization and job demands changed, some early strengths became weaknesses and some early weaknesses began to matter. The most common reasons for derailment included specific performance problems, insensitivity to others, failure to delegate or build a team, and over dependence on a single advocate or mentor (McCall & Lombardo, 1983).

Although the successful and derailed executives shared many of the same skills and flaws, those who had risen to the top: (1) had more diversity in their job backgrounds and had done different kinds of things well; (2) maintained equanimity under stress; (3) handled mistakes with poise and grace; (4) focused on problems and solved them; and (5) gotten along with a variety of people.

Later CCL studies expanded on this research. Morrison et al. (1987) replicated the 1983 research but focused on women. This study was conducted in 25 companies from a wide variety of industries. Again, top executives were asked to report on a manager who had been successful in reaching the top post and one who had not been successful. A total of 22 success factors emerged for executive women, each mentioned by at least two of the senior executives who were interviewed. Six major success factors were used to describe two-thirds of the successful women: (1) help from above; (2) a track record of achievements; (3) desire to succeed; (4) ability to manage subordinates; (5) willingness to take career risks; and (6) ability to be tough, decisive, and demanding.

Interestingly, help from more senior executives was mentioned by every interviewee as a factor contributing to these women's success. Other top factors, mentioned by over half of the senior executives, attributed to the successful women

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included intelligence, impressive image, ability to work with others, ability to adapt, and a factor named "easy to be with."

Women who derailed were seen as having good track records of performance early in their careers and as exceptionally intelligent. Some of the more common reasons for derailment among women were an inability to adapt to a boss or culture, performance problems, being overly ambitious, and inability to lead subordinates or to be strategic, presenting a poor image, and poor relationships.

Most of the studies focused on executive derailment within the United States; however, later studies examined the similarities and differences between executive derailment findings in the United States and those in European settings (Leslie & Van Velsor, 1996). This derailment research analyzed the executive derailment phenomena by examining situations in which managers were on track to become part of the top management team, but were derailed prior to that event and as the research has been carried out using both qualitative methods and mixed-methods approaches. The researchers interviewed forty Fortune 500 corporate executives who had been perceived as having the potential to be very successful in their careers but were demoted, transferred, fired, opted for early retirement, or simply stopped advancing. Key events in the careers of the forty executives studied were identified using a structured interview. The four research questions were:

1. Why were those who derailed so successful in the first place?

2. What events brought their weakness to the surface?

3. Why did they derail?

4. How did they differ from those who remained successful?

The executive derailment studies conducted reveal four major themes (see Table 2). These themes are classified as: 1) Problems with Interpersonal Relationships; 2) Failure to Meet Business Objectives; 3) Inability to Build and Lead a Team, and; 4) Inability to Change or Adapt During a Transition (Leslie & Van Velsor, 1996).

Problems with Interpersonal Relationships. Within this theme are those executives who are described by others as being, "insensitive, manipulative, critical, demanding, authoritarian, self-isolating, or aloof" (Leslie & Van Velsor, 1996, p. 16). Problems with interpersonal relationships account for most of the negative personality characteristics that would cause an executive to experience difficulties during his career.

Problems with interpersonal relationships are those deficits that derail an executive based on the social context of work. Executives that derail based on problems with interpersonal relationships may be task or content competent, but, ultimately may fail due to their inability to interact appropriately with colleagues, supervisors, or subordinates. This theme is closely related to the emotional intelligence literature. Many of these executives have been described as either manipulative or insensitive (Leslie & Van Velsor, 1996). Other studies have highlighted terms such as ruthless, too ambitious, or unwilling to communicate (Hollenbeck & McCall, 2001).

Researchers have become aware that when an executive derails and a number of factors can be identified leading to the derailment, the first and most often mentioned reason, at least as reported by others, is usually problems with interpersonal relationships. (Lombardo & McCauley, 1988). Although it should be noted that in their 1988 study, Lombardo and McCauley found that difficulty with interpersonal relationships was correlated with derailment in some organizations but not in others. In those organizations

that valued teamwork and team-building, such professional flaws were more likely to be

mentioned as the reason for the executive derailment.   The summary of the four

dominate themes discussed above can be seen in Table 2.

Table 2
Enduring Derailment Themes within the For-Profit Business Sector
(adapted and added to from Leslie & Van Velsor, 1996, p. 17)

Theme	McCall & Lombardo (1983)	Morrison et al (1987)	Lombardo & McCauley (1988)	Leslie & Van Velsor, USA (1996)	Leslie & Van Velsor Europe (1996)	Hollenbeck & McCall (2001)
Problems with Interpersonal Relationships	Insensitive to others Cold, aloof, arrogant Overly ambitious	Poor relations Too ambitious	Problems with interpersonal relations Isolates self	Poor working relations Authoritarian	Poor working relations Organizational isolation Authoritarian	Too ruthless Promoted himself too much
Failure to Meet Business Objectives	Betrayal of trust Poor performance	Performance problems	Lack of follow-through	Poor performance	Poor performance	
Inability to Build and Lead a Team	Failure to staff effectively	Cannot manage subordinates	Difficulty molding a staff	Inability to build and lead a team	Inability to build and lead a team	Not tough enough
Inability to Change or Adapt During Transition	Unable to adapt to a boss with a different style Unable to think strategically	Unable to adapt to a boss or culture Not strategic	Strategic differences with management Difficulty making strategic decisions	Unable to develop or adapt Conflict with upper management	Unable to adapt or develop Conflict with upper management	Haphazard repatriation

Failure to Meet Business Objectives.   The derailment research in the for-profit business arena clearly shows that the performance of the organization matters. Failure to meet performance expectations has been related to; not following through (Lombardo & McCauley, 1988), and being overly ambitious (Leslie & Van Velsor, 1996).

An important factor that has arisen from the executive derailment research conducted by the Center for Creative Leadership is that characteristics and skills considered professional strengths early in one's career can become weaknesses as an executive moves up in the organization. For instance, most of the derailed executives, early in their careers were applauded for their ability to meet business objectives. Of course, such successes typically occur within relatively stable situations and are decisions that have far broad impact across the organization as would an executive's decision. As the individual is promoted, the working environment usually becomes more unstable; for example, more decisions are made and the individual is accountable not only for his individual decisions but possibly dozens of subordinates' decisions. Furthermore, decisions made by the executive usually have a strong impact throughout the organization as a whole. If the executive cannot adjust to these changes, the characteristics that once were strengths can become weaknesses that can lead to derailment (Kovach, 1996).

Inability to Lead a Team.   In over 25% of all derailment research, interviewees cited the inability to lead a team as the fatal flaw that led to executive derailment (Leslie & Van Velsor, 1996).   Each of the derailment themes are closely related to one another. For instance, problems with interpersonal relationships could cause an executive to be

unable to lead a team or the inability to lead a team could lead to a failure to meet business objectives.

Barbara Kovach (1986) examines the changes in expectations that are associated with promotion through organizational levels. Basically, as one advances in one's career he will be expected to work increasingly more effectively within larger operational systems and teams of people. Such an ability may not be needed early in one's career but if the skill of working with large teams is not learned or implemented later in one's career, it can cause problems for executives.

Inability to Change or Adapt During a Transition. The ability to adapt to change or to a transition encompasses many different components. According to the derailment research, this theme includes: failure to adapt to a new boss with a different style (McCall & Lombardo, 1983); an inability to adapt to the demands of a new job, a new culture, or changes in the marketplace (Morrison, White, Van Velsor, 1987), and; an overdependence on a single skill and/or a failure to acquire a new skill (Leslie & Van Veslor, 1996).

In early executive derailment studies, this theme typically referred to an executive's inability to change or adapt to a new boss or supervisor's management style. As executive derailment research has progressed, more recent studies point to the difficulty of the derailed executive to "change one's own management style toward a more participative or team-based approach" (Leslie & Van Velsor, 1996).

In fact, "In many cases, the senior executive described repeated efforts to give the (derailed) managers feedback on areas for improvement. For whatever reason, the derailed managers were unable or unwilling to learn from or apply the feedback" (Leslie

& Van Velsor, p. 23). So, there is obviously some evidence that this trait may be the most difficult one to avoid.

Executive Derailment in the Non-Profit Sector

Little research has been conducted on derailment in the non-profit sector.   One study conducted by Tropman and Shaefer (2004) focused on executive derailment in the non-profit sector. Beginning in 1993 Tropman collected articles from the *New York Times*, the *Wall Street Journal*, and other newspapers that detailed the stories of executives who had "flamed out."   The study sample looked at seventy-five incidents of derailment, and of them, eight were from the nonprofit sector (social agencies, churches, schools, etc.) (p.163). Tropman and Shaefer used these incidents to illustrate their framework for executive derailment which included four levels of "executive decompensation."

The derailment factors within their categories of characteristics and competencies included: arrogance, overconfidence, being highly persuasive, and having a strong need for excessive flattery or ego stroking (Light, 2002). Derailment factors associated with conditions and contexts included: executive excesses and the pressures of dealing with difficult social problems each day. Finally, the derailment factors associated with change were: not dealing effectively in a fast-paced environment, and not being careful to detect and act on nuanced information in a slower-paced environment.

Calabrese and Roberts (2001) conducted a study that focused on derailment of K-12 educational leaders. This study was conducted using document analysis on over 50 cases of the derailment of either school principals or superintendents. The researchers examined articles that were reported in major newspapers throughout the United States to

ascertain the factors that were related to the derailment of the educational leaders. Calabrese and Roberts (2001) found that all of the derailed principals and superintendents demonstrated serious character flaws. Case studies portrayed the derailed educational administrators to be untrustworthy, lacking integrity in business relationships, and engaging in inappropriate sexual behavior (Calabrese & Roberts, 2001). In the majority of the cases that were analyzed, the researchers found examples of intelligent, competent leaders who neglected their ethical principles and as a result were derailed from their professional aspirations. The leader's derailment was found to "illustrate how derailment impacts the entire community disrupting the community and educational process" (Calabrese and Roberts, 2001, p. 274). This finding led the researchers to make the link between the ethics of an educational leader and the subject of derailment which is a linkage that is missing from the for-profit business literature on derailment. Calabrese and Roberts (2001) found that the absence of practicing in an ethical manner to be the foremost cause of derailment in the K-12 leaders.

These few derailment studies within the non-profit field have shown that derailed managers often have trouble in unstable environments, show personality defects, and are typically unable to adapt to a new environment. These factors are consistent with the findings of the CCL's research on derailment within the business sector. The literature on derailment within the non-profit sector provides very little insight into the field of education, especially within the field of higher education. The study on derailment within K-12 education illuminates a new factor, the ethics of leadership, which was not previously cited in the findings of the studies conducted by the CCL. The new factor, an

ethical failure of the leader, is an important consideration in education, especially higher education, when the presidents of institutions hold so many different stakeholders in trust.

Conceptual Framework

The four enduring themes of derailment from the research by the Center for Creative Leadership provided the conceptual framework upon which this study was founded. Although these themes are not meant to be all encompassing, they do present the most accurate representation of derailment and factors associated with derailment. The four enduring themes as cited by Leslie and Van Velsor (1996) imply that executive derailments can be classified in one or more of the following categories:

1. Problems with Interpersonal Relationships;

2. Failure to Meet Business Objectives;

3. Inability to Lead a Team; and

4. Inability to Change or Adapt during a Transition

Summary

Leadership effectiveness is an important field of study for organizations. Having effective leaders who act with integrity is essential to developing trust within organizations and can lead to more effective organizations (Aviolo, 2004). Effective leaders are those who have the capacity to learn, the capacity to change, and managerial wisdom (Boal &Hooijberg, 2001). Effective leaders in higher education should be energetic visionaries who have the ability to lead various constituents to a common goal (Fisher, 1988).

Despite the breadth of literature related to leadership effectiveness, some leaders still fail to flourish. Examining the actions of the leaders who derail is crucial to the study of leadership effectiveness in a broader context. Research on leadership derailment provides future and current leaders with information on ineffective leadership behaviors and could help leaders avoid the same pitfalls of the derailed leaders.

Although there have been several studies conducted by the Center for Creative Leadership on the subject of derailment, those studies have focused mainly on mid-level executives who derailed on their way to senior level leadership positions.   Throughout the CCL literature on executive derailment, four enduring themes have emerged: 1) problems with interpersonal relationships; 2) failure to meet business objectives; 3) inability to build and lead a team; and 4) inability to change or adapt during a transition (Van Velsor & Leslie, 1995). Within the for-profit literature on derailment, there are limited amounts of research on leaders who are at the top of the organization and then derail. Further, the research on derailment in the non-profit sector is also limited to mid-level leadership derailment. Also, the literature on derailment within the field of education is severely limited and focused on superintendents within the K-12 arena. No studies have been conducted on leadership derailment within the higher education field. The present study explored the factors and events associated with the derailment of community college presidents.

CHAPTER 3

RESEARCH DESIGN AND METHODOLOGY

Introduction

The purpose of the study was to describe the factors associated with presidential derailments at public community colleges. The research questions guiding the study were:

1. What are the factors that lead to the derailment of community college presidents?

2. What events lead to the derailment of the president?

3. What is the relationship, if any, between the Center for Creative Leadership factors and those found in this study?

This chapter addresses the research design, research sites and populations, sources of data, data collection procedures, and data analysis procedures employed in the study. Finally, the issue of data trustworthiness (reliability and validity) is addressed at the conclusion of this chapter.

Research Design

Creswell (2005) suggests that one should utilize a qualitative methodology when one is aiming to gain "a detailed understanding of a central phenomenon" (p. 45). Since a major goal of this study was to gain a deep understanding of the circumstances surrounding derailment at community colleges, qualitative methods were employed in this study. Further, there is a lack of research in this area. According to Rosenblatt and Fischer, a qualitative approach "allows extensive probing in areas that have not been well

studied and in which tightly structured non-qualitative approaches are difficult to use because of a lack of theory or research literature to guide tightly structured investigation" (1993, p. 173). Finally, Creswell (1994) identifies four characteristics of a qualitative research problem that existed in the present study: (1) the research is exploratory; (2) the variables which are important to understand the phenomenon are unknown; (3) the context of the phenomena is important to understand the phenomena; and, (4) the phenomena may lack a theory base for study.

Multiple case study design was used to examine the four public community colleges that had experienced a presidential derailment within the last seven years. Case study is best chosen when there is a need to understand complex situations (Merriam, 1998).

"A case study design is employed to gain an in-depth understanding of the situation and meaning for those involved. The interest is in the process rather than outcomes, in context rather than a specific variable, in discovery rather than confirmation. Insights gleaned from case studies can directly influence policy, practice, and future research" (Merriam, 1998, p.19).

Merriam (1998) also described case studies as being particularistic, descriptive, and heuristic. "Particularistic means that case studies focus on a particular situation, event, program, or phenomenon" (p. 29). Readers may find direction for similar situations through review of a case study and examination of a specific case may also reveal an overall general problem. "Descriptive means that the end product of a case study is a rich, thick, description of the phenomenon under study. Thick description is a term from anthropology and means the complete, literal description of the incident or

entity being investigated" (p. 29) In the case study, not only are the outcomes of a

phenomenon described, but also the processes, ideas, and opinions involved. The

descriptive nature of the case study is valuable due to the fact that the study is not limited.

Influences of such items as varying viewpoints, passage of time, and varying written

materials such as reports, articles, and correspondence can be examined and presented in

a variety of ways. "Heuristic means that case studies illuminate the reader's

understanding of the phenomenon under study" (p.30). Through increased understanding

of a phenomenon (community college president's derailment), the background, values,

and characteristics of the presidents can be examined. What happened in the derailment

and why a president failed can be more deeply understood.

This study sought to describe the factors associated with presidential derailments

at community colleges. Describing the factors of presidential derailment involved not

only reviewing the facts in each case, but developing a thick, rich description of the

issues involved and the ideas and opinions from the people who worked with the

president. Therefore, a case study approach was chosen to best allow the research

needed for the completion of this study.

Research Sites and Population

The sites for this study consisted of public community colleges in the United

States that had experienced a presidential derailment within the last seven years. For the

purpose of this study, derailment was defined as a sitting community college president

who departed from his/her position non-voluntarily before he/she had completed five

years of work.

From this sample of institutions, at least three people who had knowledge of factors and conditions associated with the derailed president were interviewed on each site.

The presidential derailment cases were selected from a list generated by the President of the American Community College Association and the President of Pellissippi State Community College. In addition to these sources, the researcher made use of *The Chronicle of Higher Education* and *Inside Higher Education* publications to identify potential sites. The list was narrowed by excluding any presidents who had served their institutions longer than five years and any institutions which were not public community colleges.

A purposeful sample of twelve institutions was selected.   Letters were sent to the current presidents of each college, asking for participation in the study. The majority of the presidents did not respond, so phone calls were placed to each of the non-responding institutions. In most cases the presidents said they did not want to or could not participate in the study.

Four community colleges agreed to participate in the study. After agreeing to participate, the current president was asked to identify a governing board member, a vice president or senior level administrator who had worked closely with the derailed president, and a faculty member to ask to participate in the study.   The researcher then contacted the recommended members via letter.   Some of those members agreed to participate and other did not.   In the situations in which an individual declined participation, the researcher asked the current president for additional names of

individuals with knowledge about the derailment.   Table 3 shows a comparative look at

the four colleges which agreed to participate in this study.

Table 3

Summary Profile of Community Colleges in the Study

	Case I	Case II	Case III	Case IV
Student Enrollment	56,000	4,000	2,100	13,000
Geographic Region	South East	North East	South East	South West
Single or Multiple Campus	Multiple	Single	Single	Multiple
Governance	Locally appointed	State/Local appointed	Locally elected	Locally elected
Finance	139 million	48 million	9 million	18 million

Sources of Data

At each participating institution, four separate in depth, one-on-one interviews

were conducted. Each interview was audio taped. In addition, minutes from governing

board and presidential meetings, media and newspaper coverage were used as sources of

data for this study. A major focus was given to the in-depth interviews. Patton (2002)

argues that the "purpose of interviewing is to allow us to enter into the other person's

perspective…to find out what is in and on someone else's mind, to gather their stories"

(p. 341). There were four reasons for using standardized, open-ended interviews:

1.   The exact instrument used in the evaluation is available for inspection by those who will use the findings of the study.

2.   Variation among interviewers can be minimized where a number of different interviewers must be used;

3.   The interview is highly focused so that interviewee time is used efficiently;

4.   Analysis is facilitated by making responses easy to find and compare (Patton, 2002, p. 346).

In regard to audio taping interviews, Patton states that, "The use of the tape recorder does not eliminate the need for taking notes, but does allow you to concentrate on taking strategic and focused notes, rather than attempting verbatim notes," (p. 383). Interview notes served at least four purposes:

1.   Interview notes can assist the interviewer in identifying appropriate interview probes;

2.   Reviewing notes before transcripts are complete may stimulate early insights into relevant themes that may be relevant to pursue in subsequent interviews;

3.   Taking notes about what is said will facilitate later analysis;

4.   Notes are a back-up in the event of a recording malfunction (Patton, 2002, p. 383).

An interview questionnaire (Appendix A), adapted from two questions used by Leslie and Van Velsor (1996) to study derailment and longevity in both North American and European executives, was also used.

Questions on the protocol included:

The following open-ended questions were asked to initiate the interview:

1) What factors did you perceive as contributing to the departure of the derailed president?

2) What events may have occurred that contributed to or influenced the departure of the past president?

3) Is there anything else related to the departure of the president that you would like to tell me?

Follow up probes and questions were asked based on responses to questions. The interviews were standardized for all participants, open-ended in format, and lasted approximately one hour. Participants were asked each question in the same fashion and in the same order, to afford appropriate comparisons across interviews (Patton, 2002).

Another form of data collection was field notes. During the course of each interview, detailed notes were taken to deal with items that were not caught on the audio tape. Pauses in speech, body language, and gestures were carefully noted. Other observations were noted, such as the setting of the interview and how that might influence the participant's answers. Proficient interviewers should be very cognizant of the unspoken messages that can occur during one-on-one interviews because the nonverbal notes can add rich data to the research (Patton, 2002).

In addition to the one-on-one interviews and field notes, documents such as newspaper reports, media coverage, and minutes from presidential staff meetings and board meetings were analyzed. All data sources were analyzed for common themes. Table 4 shows a document summary utilized for the research project.

Table 4

Summary of Documents Reviewed

	Case I	Case II	Case III	Case IV
Documents				
College Catalogs	+	+	+	+
College Web Sites	+	+	+	+
Board Minutes	+	+	+	
State / Regional Newspapers	+	+	+	
National Newspapers	+		+	

Note. + indicates documents used; a blank space indicates documents not available

Data Collection Procedures

Study approval was granted by The University of Tennessee, Knoxville (UTK), Institutional Review Board (IRB) prior to the beginning of data collection (Appendix C).

From the list of eligible institutions, a purposeful sample of twelve institutions was drawn. An initial contact letter was sent to the current president of the institution. The communication explained the purpose of the study, requested permission to examine the derailment event at the college, and informed the president that he/she would receive a follow-up telephone call to answer questions, schedule an interview time, and ask for recommendations on board member participants, vice president participants, or any other members of the college who may have had intimate knowledge of the derailment.

Upon approval and recommendation of the current president at each institution, the researcher followed up with a letter to the member of the governing board of each eligible institution and to one of the vice presidents at the institution requesting their participation.

The initial contacts were important to build rapport with the participants and to secure the interviews. "Rapport means that I respect the people being interviewed, so what they say is important because of who is saying it" (Patton 2002). After approval of the current president, the researcher determined which individuals had the most intimate knowledge of the derailment event by employing the concept of chaining. After making the initial contact with the current president and obtaining his approval, the researcher asked individuals at the college who they felt had the most knowledge of the derailment incident.

Informed Consent Forms, developed in accordance with IRB guidelines (Appendix D) were distributed to participants for signing before interviews were conducted. Most interviews were conducted in person, although three interviews were conducted by phone. Telephone interviews had some advantages, as participants were more at ease in speaking over the phone. Telephone interviews are also generally viewed as less intrusive by the participants (McClelland, 1994). In the event that the telephone interview method was used, the Informed Consent form was sent to the participant prior to the interview session.

Each interview was held at the convenience and ease of the participant and lasted no more than one hour. Each participant was assured that participation throughout the study would remain voluntary and that confidentiality would be protected by using pseudonyms for participants and institutions. Participants were also assured that all data were kept securely in a locked office by the researcher.

All interviews were conducted between January 2008 and August 2010. With the consent of participants, interviews were tape recorded and verbatim transcripts were

created upon completion of each interview. Notes were also taken during the interviews to capture mood, facial expression, and other nuances unable to be captured by tape. The transcripts of the interviews were sent to each participant in an effort to member check the interview process. Member checking allowed each participant to have the opportunity to clarify statements or viewpoints (Mertens, 1998).

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

Analysis of the qualitative data in the study involved reading and re-reading of transcripts and notes, identifying patterns and themes across and within interviews, coding data, and making comparisons with respect to themes (Bogdan & Biklen, 2003). Data were labeled with codes that identified major themes and patterns. Next, the codes were used to systematize and classify the themes (Patton, 2002).

The data were searched for common and distinctive themes. The interview data were coded and analyzed in a series of steps. Step one involved open coding. This phase involved breaking down the data into discrete parts and giving each small incident a name or label. Step two involved axial coding, which took the identified labels and compared them within the categories. Axial coding allowed the researcher to compare relationships between the categories. Step three involved selective coding, which took one primary, core category (theme) and showed the relationship of the other categories to it (Strauss & Corbin, 1990).

The themes were analyzed to compare against previous derailment research findings and between participant type (vice president, board member, or faculty member). When analyzing qualitative data for themes, "one cannot decide in a vacuum which classes [topics of themes found] are 'right' or 'best.' There must be clear linkage to the

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study's conceptual framework and research questions" (Miles & Huberman 1984, p. 223). In the case of this study, the first research question was addressed by interview questions one and three, while the second research question was addressed by interview question two. The third and final interview question helped to address both research questions posed in this study.

Trustworthiness of Data

To insure the reliability and enhance the trustworthiness of the data collected a number of strategies were employed. After transcribing the audio taped interviews, the researcher e-mailed a copy of the transcript to the participant to confirm that the content of the transcript was correct. Further, the researcher maintained an audit trail detailing precisely what was done. Also, this study employed source triangulation. "By triangulating . . . researchers can make substantial strides in overcoming the skepticism that greets singular methods, lone analysts, and single-perspective interpretations" (Patton, 2002, p. 556). Through source triangulation the researcher compared multiple viewpoints and multiple data sources within the same qualitative method.

Source triangulation occurred in three ways, in this study. First, newspaper, media accounts, board minutes and other meeting minutes were collected and analyzed. Second, the gathering of multiple perspectives of the sitting president, the board member, the vice president, and faculty member provided different perspectives, adding to the trustworthiness of data. Finally, another researcher versed in qualitative research and derailment research reviewed the interview protocols and the themes revealed by the data.

CHAPTER IV

FINDINGS

The purpose of this study was to explore the factors associated with presidential derailments in a public community college setting.

The research questions guiding the study were:

1) What were the factors associated with the presidential derailment?

2) What precipitating events led to the derailment of the president?

3) What relationship, if any, may be found between derailment factors emerging from previous Center for Creative Leadership research and factors emerging from this study?

Four public community colleges served as the data collection sites. From those four institutions, 16 interviews were completed. These 16 interviews were collected from 16 different individuals.

Using data collected from the interviews as well as the analysis of information obtained from public records and media sources a wealth of information was available to examine which resulted in the following findings.

<center>**Results**</center>

<center>**Case Study I – Community College A**</center>

Community College Environment

Community College A is a large, urban, multi-campus, public community college located in the south east. It offers over 100 career technical programs and hundreds of college transfer courses through Associate of Science and Arts degrees. This institution has an enrollment of slightly over 56,000 students across its three campuses. The student body is very diverse, with thirty percent being Hispanic and twenty percent being African American. It is one the largest community colleges within the state and it has an operating budget of approximately $139 million annually.

The college is both locally governed by a board of trustees, and by a system wide chancellor. The state system is responsible for regulatory decisions affecting all community colleges within the state. The local board of trustees is appointed by the governor and board members are not paid. They usually serve two, four-year terms, although there is no official term limit. Funding for the college comes solely through the state (no local support) and there is no state level approval required for hiring or firing employees at the college. Governance of the college does involve the presence of a faculty union.

Derailment Themes

In this case, the current president, the former president, a vice president, and a board member were interviewed. Analysis of data revealed four themes that contributed to the derailment of the president at Community College A.

Difficulty working with governing board. Derailment theme 1 involves difficulty

working with the board of trustees. In the interviews concerning this case, the

overwhelming consensus was that the board was getting too involved in the day-to-day

workings of the college; and the derailed president was unable to strike the balance

needed to keep the board happy while doing what was best for the college. The previous

academic vice president stated,

> When (derailed president) came to the college, the board thought that they
> were going to be able to tell him what to do, but (derailed president) was
> his own person. He tried to create the needed space a president needs
> between the board and the college. (Derailed president) was a real
> collaborator. He came in and started working with the faculty and he
> didn't buy into the board's view that the union was the enemy. The
> board tried to tell him what to do. When board members began trying to
> make decisions on who is getting construction bids and who is getting
> hired for the dean of nursing position, you're in trouble. (Derailed
> president) knew this was a shaky situation and he tried his best to keep a
> healthy distance, but at one point (I think he was trying to placate them) he
> allowed one of the most rambunctious board members to serve on the
> search committee for the HR director and that was the beginning of the
> end.

A previous board member similarly stated, "There were two board members that

really lobbied to hire (derailed president) so when he got the position, they thought he

should be beholden to them, but he wasn't." Finally, she stated, "It was just a sad

situation because right from the beginning we had two renegade board members trying to

get their way and run the college and then (derailed president) got defensive and stubborn

and it got messy."

> Similarly, the current president at the college summed up the situation as such,
>
> There was a loss of trust on both sides. (Derailed president) called me and
> complained that the board was micro-managing the campus, so I called
> each board member. I could tell that they didn't trust (derailed president)
> just as much as he didn't trust them. Once trust and communication is
> gone, it is hard to salvage.

Finally, *The Chronicle of Higher Education* quoted the derailed president as saying, "two lawyers on the board had increasingly tried to micromanage college operations." *The Chronicle* went on to report, "Their questioning hampered his ability to do his job, he said, and the other trustees on the five-member board have not done enough to intervene on his behalf. For example, he said, the board stymied salary negotiations with the faculty union by refusing to vote on a pay package that (name omitted) had endorsed."

Failure to adapt to the institutional culture. The second derailment theme involves the failure of the president to adapt to the culture of the college. In this case culture can be defined as the untested or unchallenged assumptions under which the college community works.

The derailed president in Case A followed two long-term presidents. Each of the previous presidents was born and raised in (city omitted). The first president led Community College A for 18 years, and the president prior to (derailed president) led the college for 15 years. The derailed president came to the college from another state and knew little about the local community and the culture of Community College A. An important part of the culture was the faculty union. Under the leadership of previous presidents, the board of directors had felt that they were able to keep the faculty at a "comfortable distance" especially when it came to salary negotiations. When the derailed president was hired, he was perceived to be "too collaborative" with the faculty. This made the board very uneasy. The previous president stated,

> I had been there for years, I was from (city omitted) I knew the local
> politics, understood the board, knew the faculty, understood the salary
> negotiations with the faculty union. I knew how to keep the board
> informed, but not too involved. (Derailed president) was from (state

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omitted) and some faculty and board members called me and said, he's not like you. Well, of course he's not, you hired him, you wanted change, you wanted someone different than me and now you're complaining? You can't ask a person to come in and be a change agent but act exactly like the last guy. It just doesn't work that way.

The previous vice president said something similar,

> The board knew what they could and couldn't do with (former president). (Former president) kept them (the board) at bay, but still involved. (Former president) knew how much information to give them. It is an art, I guess – I am still learning. When (derailed president) was hired, he was very different than (former president) and of course there is the honeymoon period, but that was short, and then the board expected that (derailed president) would be just like (former president) which was obviously way off… they are totally different people with totally different strengths. The board seemed to be particularly worried at how closely (derailed president) was listening to faculty. They were worried that he would listen to them (the faculty) more than his bosses (the board).

Failure to communicate effectively. The third derailment theme was the president's failure to communicate effectively. This theme mostly centered on the president's failure to communicate effectively with the board more than any other groups. The derailed president seemed to fail at understanding how to effectively communicate his vision with the board and get their buy-in on projects he wanted to move forward. One participant stated, "He was a great leader and I never once thought he wasn't doing what was best for the college. His biggest mistake though was not talking to the board enough and getting them on his side." Throughout the interviews there was a sense that the derailed president did not do enough to set some ground rules regarding expectations of the board in the beginning.

An important component of communication is listening and from all the participants' accounts, the derailed president in Community College Case A seemed to be

a good listener and quite a collaborative person. Unfortunately, he may have listened too

much to the board. A previous board member stated,

> "He listened to the wrong people. He was naïve and thought that the
> board would work together with him for the betterment of the college. We
> didn't. We had two bully members that got their way no matter what.
> When he (derailed president) first got there, he should have sat down with
> everyone and said, 'what do you expect from me" – what is the plan here?
> Here is what I expect of you.' And then he could have asked, what can the
> board do to help me be successful. You know, let us know that if he fails,
> we have failed too. He never did."

Similarly, the current president stated,

> (Derailed president) hadn't included them (the board) in the development
> of the master plan the way that (former president) had. When (former
> president) had created the previous master plan the board had felt a lot of
> ownership and I guess (derailed president) wasn't astute enough or wasn't
> sensitive enough to know that that was what the board was expecting.
> They (the board) were expecting the same level of involvement that they
> got from (former president).

> *Problems with Interpersonal Relationships.*   Many favorable comments about the

derailed president's character and collaborative nature were heard, particularly about the

changes championed at the institution. But some comments were made regarding him

being stubborn, egotistical, and having 'trust issues'. A board member from Community

College A stated,

> He could be quite stubborn, once he made up his mind on something, you
> were not going to dissuade him and it wasn't even about being right. It
> seemed to be about winning. I think they call it machismo. He could be
> egotistical sometimes and not want to listen to those who were trying to
> help him. He got defensive.

A former vice president at Community College A said something similar,

> I am not sure about this but I think that he made some promises that he
> couldn't keep. He wasn't as upfront or as honest as he probably should
> have been with the faculty or the board. He made them some promises
> regarding salary and then he wasn't able to keep them.

The current president stated, "There was a lack of trust there on both sides (the board and the derailed president). There were definitely some integrity issues."

Summary of Derailment Themes for Community College A

The derailment that occurred at Community College A happened as a result of many issues; however, four major themes were discovered. First, the derailed president had difficulty working with key constituents, namely the board of trustees. The board had two members on it that were micromanaging the work of the president and he could not strike the balance needed to get his job done and maintain a good working relationship with them. Next, the president failed to adapt to the institutional culture. The president came in from another state and followed a well respected long term president. He was unable to adapt to the culture of the institution and the board (the way of doing things, making decisions, etc.). He did not take enough time to determine the power structure before making decisions. Similarly, the president failed to communicate his vision for the college effectively. He missed opportunities to include others in being a part of the vision for the college. Finally, the derailed president had problems with interpersonal skills. Once under fire within the community college, he got defensive and stubborn and did not provide the character needed to keep his job.

There was no one specific happening or event that led to the president's derailment at Community College A. Rather, the end occurred after repeated problems in dealing with an overpowering and micromanaging board.

Case Study II – Community College B

Community College Environment

Community College B is a single campus community college located in the northeastern part of the US. It has an enrollment of a little over 4,000 students and offers approximately thirty-five transfer and technical degree programs. The student body is fairly homogeneous; however the college is home to approximately 150 international students.

Community College B is governed by a local board of trustees half of whom are appointed by the governor and half by the local county government. Board members are not paid, usually serve seven to ten year terms, and can be re-appointed after their initial term ends. Funding for Community College B comes from both state appropriations and local support. The total operating budget for Community College B is $48 million. At Community College B, the faculty is unionized.

Derailment Themes

Chaining was utilized for this case study as the interim president who immediately followed the derailed president suggested the names of a vice president, a board member, an executive assistant, and a faculty member to interview.   Analysis of data revealed three themes that contributed to the derailment of the president at Community College B.

Difficulty working with key constituencies. Derailment theme one involves difficulty working with key constituencies. In the interviews concerning this case, the overwhelming consensus was that a major factor that led to the derailment of the president was his difficulty in working with the newly elected county commissioner and

then later the board of trustees. The new county commissioner was elected during the second year of the derailed president's tenure at the college. The county commissioner had a great deal of power and influence, and was very vocal about many issues. The county had recently received $14 million in a legal settlement. The board of trustees encouraged the derailed president to lobby for use of the money for a capital project to renovate a dilapidated building on campus. The community was behind this effort and all was well until the newly elected county commissioner said that she wanted to use the money to renovate a county building under her jurisdiction. A public debate ensued. When the new Commissioner had the opportunity to appoint members of the board of trustees (half of whom the county executive appoints), she used her authority and influence to make certain that the members she appointed knew that she could no longer work with the derailed president.

A faculty member stated, "The only thing that (derailed president) did wrong was care about the college too much. All his actions were to support the college. We really needed that new building, but with the political atmosphere in (city omitted), - no way he was going to win once she made it a fight.

A senior aide added, "There was nothing we could do. The county executive made us out to be the enemy before we could turn around; then it got into the press and it spun out of control. Fights sell, drama sells, and it got messy."
A previous vice president said,

> (The derailed president) wouldn't back down after the county executive
> made her stance. I guess it was a good thing, about his personality, you
> know, he was standing up for the college, but it was his fatal flaw, he
> wouldn't just turn over, and it ended up costing him his job.

Problems with Interpersonal Relationships. Derailment Theme two involves issues with interpersonal relationships with others at the institution and individuals associated with the institution (board, community, etc.). In this case, the derailed president was described as difficult to approach, snobby, disingenuous and egotistical. The previous vice president stated,

> I think the way that (the derailed president) conducted himself, his
> confidence, and his overall look (he was always dressed to the nines)
> caused some locals to be suspicious of him. He was slick and I think that
> he was perceived as disingenuous. I remember telling him, 'you– you
> need to be nicer.' I could see the looks on some people's faces. I could
> just tell they thought he was full of himself, you know? That's just the
> way he was - it is hard to change who you are.

A faculty member similarly stated, "(the derailed president) seemed difficult to approach, not down to earth, kind of like he thought he was better than everyone else. I am sure he didn't mean to come off that way, but he did." Also, the derailed president's senior aid stated, "we had to work on his approach, he came off a little snobby"

Failure to adapt to the institutional culture. The third derailment theme involves the failure of the president to adapt or change to the culture of the college and that of the community. The derailed president in Case B followed a long-term president who had been promoted from within the college. The former president had previously been the Vice President for Academic affairs and knew all the faculty and staff and had lived in the town for very many years. The derailed president in Case B was from another part of the country and was viewed as an 'outsider' by many in the small community. The community in which Community College B is located is a small industrial town where most citizens were not educated past high school. A faculty member stated,

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> We didn't trust him at first because he didn't seem like he was one of us. We were used to (former president) and it took us some time to get to know him – some faculty, well, they um never really gave him a chance.

Another participant stated,

> I remember a board member making a comment to me about (derailed president's) cuff links. He said something like 'look at him – with those cuff links' - you know like who does he think he is.

Many comments were made that the derailed president really had the best intentions of the institution at heart; however, the issues with institutional and community culture were more about the community's failure to accept him as one of 'their' own. Once the public debate started over how to use the settlement money, it was easy for the county executive to frame the 'derailed' president as an outsider; "someone who didn't know what was best for the community."

A senior aid stated,

> We did what we could for his image. He went to everything –every event the community had. The community just wanted to believe what they heard in the newspaper and on t.v. you know, if it's on t.v. then it must be true and the news folks were not behind him – they were behind her (the county executive).

Summary of Derailment Themes for Community College B

The derailment of the president at Community College B centered mostly around one event; the public fight with the county commissioner. However there were three themes that surfaced that contributed to the president's departure. First, the derailed president had difficulty working with key constituents. In this case, the most difficult and powerful constituent was the county commissioner. Once in a public debate with her, he was not powerful enough to fight for the college and keep his job. The county

commissioner appointed enough people on the board and used her influence with the board to have him fired.

Next, the derailed president had problems with interpersonal relationships. He was seen as an 'outsider, arrogant, and snobby." Those in the community had a difficult time accepting him as one of their own.

Finally, the derailed president failed to adapt to the institutional culture. This theme goes hand in hand with the previous theme. The president failed to change his leadership style and personal characteristics to be more accepted by the college and the community as a whole.

At Community College B, one main event lead to the president's derailment. The critical event centered on the public debate with the county commissioner over the tobacco settlement money and how to spend it. Various news outlets reported on this conflict and ultimately the county commissioner appointed a new board member and influenced enough of the other board members to result in the terminating of the president's contract.

Case Study III – Community College C

Community College Environment

Community College C is a single campus community college located in the southeastern part of the US. It has an enrollment of a little over 2,000 students and offers approximately twenty transfer, technical, and certificate programs. The student body is fairly homogeneous and the campus and culture is noted for an extreme laid back atmosphere and lifestyle. The largest industry in the surrounding community is tourism.

Community College C is governed by a local board of five trustees who are appointed by the governor. Board members are not paid and usually serve four to eight year terms, but there are no term limits. Funding for the college comes solely through the state (no local support) and there is no state level approval for hiring or firing employees at the college. The total operating budget for the college is approximately $9 million annually. The college does not have a faculty union.

Derailment Themes

Chaining was utilized for this case study as the president who immediately followed the derailed president suggested the name of the current chairman of the board of trustees, a faculty member and a senior staff member. Analysis of data revealed three themes that contributed to the derailment of the president at Community College C.

Problems with Interpersonal Relationships. Derailment Theme one involves problems with interpersonal relationships specifically related to the president's management style and her personality. She had difficulty creating and maintaining successful relationships with others at the institution and individuals associated with the institution (board, community, etc.). In this case, many comments were made about the derailed president's very strong personality. She was described as demanding, a bully, hostile, demeaning, and crazy. One participant stated,

> Well, let me put it this way, she uh… she threw a drink in a colleague's face … you know, at a college party. She called people terrible names. She even described herself as a 'potty mouth', but this was bad, I mean really bad.

A local newspaper described similar issues related to this theme. "Former and current college employees and faculty have accused the president of verbal and mental

abuse, inflating enrollment, paranoia and having a *hit list* of employees she wants gone. Some have called her 'crazy'."

In none of the interviews did the researcher receive any additional information regarding the "inflating enrollment" comment from the article above, but many comments were made about the derailed president having a very strong personality. Similarly, a faculty member stated,

> She was exciting, she was a change agent; it was… you know.. what we needed, but she could have toned it down a bit. I mean… she was doing what she thought was needed to move the college in the right direction, but she should have toned down her personality a bit. I think she just got too excited by her own level of power. She fired a lot of people in a really short amount of time and that is never going to make you popular.

Failure to adapt to the institutional culture. The second derailment theme involves the failure of the president to adapt or change to the culture of the college and that of the community. The derailed president in Case C followed a long-term president who had been promoted from within the college. The former president had served for more than twenty-five years at the college. He had known all the faculty and staff and had lived in the town for many years. The derailed president in Case C was from another part of the country and she was viewed as an 'outsider' by many in the small tightly-knit community. The community in which Community College C is located is a small tourist town where there are some key power structures. The overwhelming sentiment from the interviews was that the derailed president came in like a lightening rod and shook the place up; however, the college and the community were not ready for such a fast a furious pace of change.

The board member stated,

We brought her in to turn this place around. We were on the state's 'critical concern' list because of declining enrollments and we needed someone who wasn't afraid of change. Well, she came in alright and after her first year about half the full time faculty was gone – either she had fired them or they had just left. She boosted enrollment, got us a new web site, got a million dollar grant, and was really a mover and a shaker. But you can't just let all those people go and expect them to be happy about it. I think she did too much too fast. She should have formed some task forces or committees and at least let them think she was involving them.

In regard to her clash with staff and faculty and naiveté regarding the power structure of a small tourist town, a faculty member stated,

She didn't understand the powerful people she was going up against in this community and how resistant to change and complacent the faculty and staff had become. She thought she could just come in and make all these widespread changes that fast without making anyone upset – don't think so.

A senior staff member similarly stated,

I don't think that you can overestimate the importance of culture – this town and this college has a very unique, laid back, laissez-faire culture. We are totally 'go with the flow' - you know, so when someone comes from the outside and starts bossing us around and actually making us work – well that's not gonna go over well.

Difficulty working with key constituencies. Derailment theme three involves difficulty working with key constituencies. In the interviews concerning this case, the consensus was that the derailed president had difficulty working with many different key constituents. From all the interviews conducted, it was evident that there were many people in support of the derailed president and there were just as many (if not more) who did not support the derailed president. A local paper reporting on a well attended board meeting stated, "The division was evident at a five-hour special board meeting … during which 59 people commented --- about half for (derailed president) and half against."

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Ultimately, those that were not in support of the derailed president were the ones who had the political power to force her out. The current president stated,

> She didn't renew the contract of a senior administrator whose family's construction company built this town. So, then the administrator organizes a meeting of upset employees with one of the board members without (derailed president) knowing… that was the beginning of the end.

A faculty member similarly stated, "She decided to back an outside construction company to build new dorms instead of a pretty powerful local company. You can't go up against these people, you have to work with them."

> A local newspaper story summarized the real estate dilemma as such:

> Former (county omitted) county attorney (name omitted) came to (derailed president's) house with a bottle of wine and asked if (derailed president) would reconsider the choice of construction company. When (derailed president) said no, (attorney-name omitted) said, "I would hate for (derailed president) to be like Moses- - bring everyone to the promised land and then have to see it from, say, (derailed president's former state).

In this case, the derailed president's determination and excitement for getting things done caused her to make enemies of some very powerful people. In the end of her two year tenure a vacated board spot was filled by a woman who had ties to non-supporters of (derailed president). It was at this time, (according to the current president), that the derailed president could "see the writing on the wall – she didn't have the votes to keep her job…so she did the smart thing and started negotiating her departure."

Summary of Derailment Themes for Community College C

The derailment of Community College president C centered around three main themes. First, the derailed president had serious difficulty with interpersonal relationships. She was described as a bully, demanding, demeaning, and crazy. Her very

strong personality made her difficult to work for and with and made her an easy target for critics.

Second, the derailed president also failed to adapt to the closely-knit culture and power structure within the college's town. She made enemies of some very powerful people. Along these same lines, she had difficulty working with key constituencies. She had difficulty working with some staff and faculty and toward the end of her tenure she had difficulty working with the board of trustees.

In the third case, Community College C, a series of events precipitated the final derailment: almost half of the staff and faculty that the president had inherited were either fired or left within her first two years; the derailed president threw a drink in a colleague's face at a dinner party; she did not renew the contract of a top administrator whose family's construction company built the college; an anonymous e-mail campaign calling for her resignation began; and finally the derailed president did not choose a local construction company for the bid to build new dorms on campus. The combination of all this conflict and anger in addition to the president's very strong personality led to her final demise.

Case Study IV – Community College D

Community College Environment

Community College D is a large, multi-campus, public community college located in the south west. The college serves a very large geographic area. It offers 22 career technical programs and hundreds of college transfer courses through Associate of Science and Arts degrees to area four-year institutions. It has an enrollment of slightly over 10,000 students across its five campuses.

The college is governed by a five member board of trustees, who are locally elected. There are five districts within the service area of the college and a board member is elected from district. The board members are not paid and have no term limits. Funding for the college comes through the state. The college operating budget is approximately $18 million annually. The college does not have a faculty union.

Derailment Themes

Chaining was utilized for the case study as the president who immediately followed the derailed president suggested the name of a vice-president, executive aid, and a faculty member for the researcher to interview.   Analysis of data revealed three themes that contributed to the derailment of the president at Community College D.

Difficulty working with key constituencies. Derailment theme one involves difficulty working with key constituencies. In the interviews concerning this case, the consensus was that the derailed president had difficulty working with two key constituencies – the faculty and the board of trustees. From the interviews conducted, it was clear that the faculty had a great deal of power at the college and the derailed president had a very difficult time working with them. One of the points of contention between the faculty and the derailed president had been the president's examination of faculty job descriptions and his questioning of whether or not the faculty was actually completing the duties that were on their job descriptions.   The job descriptions had not been updated in some time and had listed academic advising of students as one of the faculty member's duties; however, very few faculty members were actually performing those duties.   When the president asked questions about this and proposed that faculty create specific weekly advising hours, it did not go over well with the faculty.

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Ultimately the derailed president's job ended after a short fourteen months because of a 'no confidence' vote by the faculty. According to one participant,

> The board tried to placate the faculty…keep the faculty happy and at arm's length, they didn't want to be bothered, so when they (the faculty) held a vote of no confidence, the board did nothing to support (derailed president). It was a sad state of affairs.

In regard to the power of the faculty, a senior administrator stated,

> I met a long-time, powerful, faculty member at a social gathering and she made a point to let me know how she had 'gotten rid' of someone that she didn't want to be at the college anymore. It ended up being her who led the no confidence vote against (derailed president).

As stated previously, the board from this case is locally elected and does not have term limits. The researcher learned through the interviews that some of the board members had been members of this board for more than twenty years. This was another constituency with which the derailed president had difficulty working.

One participant stated, "He didn't spend enough time with the board until it was too late. He should have talked with them more about what their vision was and tried to include them a little even if they weren't sure." Another participant mentioned,

> He should have tried to get some training for the board – I have heard of some presidents doing that- and just consulted with them more, built relationships, because then maybe they would have supported him more and given him some advice regarding the faculty.

Failure to adapt to the institutional culture. The second derailment theme involves the failure of the president to adapt or change to the culture of the college. The derailed president in Case D followed a very well-liked president who served as president for approximately eight years before retiring. The past president had previously been a vice president and was promoted to president, so his tenure at the college was a very long one. The derailed president in Case D was from the same state as institution D, but was

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coming to the college from another part of the state and a different institution.   The

culture of Community College D was described by the current president as "very very

ingrained and dominated by the faculty… it is well known that the faculty run the

institution."

Similarly, in regards to getting to know the culture, a participant stated,

He didn't take enough time to understand the informal power structure at
the institution. He was naïve. He was open and honest and was truly
doing what he thought was best, but when you shake up the status quo it
got some of the faculty upset and then they were out to get him.

A couple of the items that the derailed president worked on were policies and job

descriptions. According to one participant, "we had policies that were under revision for

ten years, and so he came in and said, 'let's get this done, but that upset the faculty – he

rattled some peoples' power structures."

Similarly, another participant stated,

He wanted to do good things like look at compensation and get some things in
order, but that really upset those – the faculty with the – uh, you know - in power.
If he had gotten to know how powerful they were - who had the power, he could
have worked with them on a task force or something and gotten them on board –
you know massage them a little. He didn't understand, um, that he was stepping
on toes.

Flawed Search Process. Derailment theme 3 relates to flaws in the presidential

search process. Various comments were made about the search process that identified and

selected the derailed president, including, "

(the derailed president) was the last guy standing. The two other
candidates bailed out and the job was offered to (derailed president).   It
was done kinda quickly and there wasn't a lot of collaboration with the
faculty which didn't help to get him off to a good start.

Another participant stated,

It was a national search and we did all the things that a search committee was supposed to do, he (derailed president) met with different groups on campus – faculty, staff, executive staff. But I think that maybe with the faculty having such power on campus, perhaps a faculty member should have been on the committee, or at least consulted more after the two other candidates dropped out. Everything just happened so fast.

Interestingly, the researcher learned that the president who was hired after the derailed president only served the college for nine months. This leads one to conclude that the conditions for working at the college are extremely difficult or the search process is flawed or perhaps a combination of the two.

Summary of Derailment Themes for Community College D

The derailment issues at Community College D can be summarized in three specific themes. First the derailed president had difficulty working with two key constituencies; the faculty and the board. Once the faculty had decided to put forth a no-confidence vote on him, his relationship was not strong enough with the board for him to keep his job.

Second, the derailed president had difficulty adapting to the culture of the institution. He was not prepared for the power structure of the college nor did he employ tactics to get the faculty to buy in to some of the changes he wanted to implement.

The third derailment theme at Community College D was a flawed search process. This event was the first in two very quick derailments at this institution. Problems with the search process were in some measure blamed for the derailments.

At Community College D, several events or controversial presidential decisions led to the president's derailment. He began looking at out-of-date policies and faculty job descriptions. He questioned whether the faculty was doing the academic student advising that was depicted on the job descriptions and he tried to establish some fairness

in compensation with a salary survey. All these decisions involved the faculty who were

the power brokers at the college and when they did not agree with these decision they put

forth a vote of no confidence. Also, because the president did not have a strong

relationship with his board of trustees they did nothing to support him after the vote of no

confidence, thus leading to the president's termination.

Cross-Case Analysis

Table 5 below provides an overview of the derailment themes that emerged from

the data.

Table 5

Summary of Derailment Themes

Case A	Case B	Case C	Case D
Theme 1: Problems with Interpersonal Relationships			
X	X	X	
Theme 2: Failure to Adapt to the Institutional Culture			
X	X	X	X
Theme 3: Difficulty working with Key Constituents			
X	X	X	X
Theme 4: Failure to Communicate Effectively			
X			
Theme 5: Flawed Selection Process			
			X

Note. x indicates theme observed; a blank indicates theme not observed

Derailment Themes Across Cases

Five derailment themes were observed in the data collected. In order to address

research question one, the themes and the frequency with which they were observed are

presented.

Problems with Interpersonal Relationships. The first derailment theme involved problems with interpersonal relationships. This included behavior that created conflict or problems between a leader and their campus constituencies. Examples included stubbornness, aloofness, demanding, and bullying behaviors. This theme was observed in three of the four case studies.

Failure to Adapt to the Institutional Culture. The second derailment theme involved a failure to adapt to the culture of the institution or the surrounding community. This theme included problems with derailed presidents following long term presidents, not understanding power structures of the college or the community, and failing to assimilate to the culture before making changes. This theme was observed in all four cases.

Difficulty Working with Key Constituencies. The third derailment theme involved the derailed president's difficulty in working with key constituencies. This included issues that caused problems within the president's various constituency groups. The constituency groups included the board of trustees, the county commissioner, faculty, and staff. This theme was observed in all four cases.

Failure to communicate effectively. The fourth derailment theme involved the president's failure to communicate effectively. This theme focused on the president's inability to communicate his or her vision effectively. Examples of this included a failure to include enough stakeholders in decisions and simply not communicating and meeting enough. This theme was observed in only one of the four cases.

Flawed Selection Process. The fifth derailment theme involved the perception of participants that the presidential selection process was flawed. There was a perception

that the college did not utilize the level of time and collaboration required to select the best leader. This theme was observed in only one of the four cases.

Analysis of Events That Led to Presidential Derailments

In response to Research Question 2, the analysis of events leading to the derailment of each of the four presidents revealed no common events. Even though there were similarities in the causes for derailment, each case had its own unique event or series of decisions or problems that led to the point at which college stakeholders began questioning the president's leadership.

In the first case, Community College A, there was no one particular happening or event that led to the president's derailment. Rather, the end occurred after repeated problems in dealing with an overpowering micromanaging board. The derailed president continually had problems keeping a healthy balance with the board of trustees. Two members of the board were micromanaging and questioning the derailed president's decisions and finally it ended up as a situation in which the president could no longer work. Three decisions or 'events' that were mentioned in the interviews were; the faculty salary negotiations that the derailed president endorsed but the board rejected, the hiring of a contractor for remodeling of a new building, and the hiring of a new nursing dean. The accumulation of the micromanaging from the board finally forced the derailed president to leave.

In the second case, Community College B, one main event lead to the president's derailment. The critical event centered on the public debate with the county commissioner over the tobacco settlement money and how to spend it. The president was

fighting for the college while the commissioner was fighting for a new building for the county. Various news outlets reported on this conflict and ultimately the county commissioner appointed a new board member and influenced enough of the other board members to result in the terminating of the president's contract.

In the third case, Community College C, a series of events precipitated the final derailment: almost half of the staff and faculty that the president had inherited were either fired or left within her first two years; she did not renew the contract of a top administrator whose family's construction company built the college; an anonymous e-mail campaign calling for her resignation began; and finally she did not choose a local construction company for the bid to build new dorms on campus. The combination of all this conflict and anger in addition to the president's very strong personality led to her final demise.

At Community College D, several events or controversial presidential decisions led to the president's derailment. He began looking at out-of-date policies and faculty job descriptions. He questioned whether the faculty was doing the academic student advising that was depicted on the job descriptions and he tried to establish some fairness in compensation with a salary survey. All these decisions involved the faculty who were the power brokers at the college and when they did not agree with these decision they put forth a vote of no confidence. Also, because the president did not have a strong relationship with his board of trustees they did nothing to support him after the vote of no confidence, thus leading to the president's termination.

Relationship Between Corporate Derailment Themes and Community College Derailment Themes

To answer Research Question 3 concerning possible relationships between the derailment themes between those found by Leslie and Van Velsor in the corporate environment and the derailment themes discovered in the present study, the themes are presented and compared in Table 6 below.

Table 6

Comparison of Derailment Themes

Leslie and Van Velsor Corporate Themes	Community College Themes
Problems with interpersonal relationships	Problems with interpersonal relationships
Failure to meet business objectives (lack of skills)	*Not observed*
Inability to build or lead a team	*Not observed*
Inability to change or adapt during a transition	Failure to adapt to the institutional culture
Not observed	Difficulty working with key constituencies
Not observed	Failure to communicate effectively
Not observed	Flawed search process

Two derailment themes in the community colleges investigated were observed to be directly related to the corporate themes reported by Leslie and Van Velsor. Perhaps the strongest comparison between the two sets of derailment themes can be found in the problems derailed leaders had with adapting to the institutional culture within their

respective institutions and communities. This theme was reported as quite challenging in all four case studies.

Another strong relationship between the community college themes and corporate derailment themes could be seen in the problems that the derailed presidents had with interpersonal relationships. This particular theme was observed in three of the four case studies.

Two themes from the Leslie and Van Velsor research that did not appear in the community college derailment study were failure to meet business objectives and the inability to build or lead a team. No comments were ever made about the derailed presidents not having the skill to perform the job. In fact, several comments were made about what good change and good jobs the derailed presidents had done. Also, the researcher never heard any comments regarding the derailed presidents not being able to build or lead a team.

Failure to Adapt to the Institutional Culture. The second derailment theme involved a failure to adapt to the culture of the institution or the surrounding community. This theme included problems with derailed presidents following long term presidents, not understanding power structures of the college or the community, and failing to assimilate to the culture before making changes. This theme was observed in all four cases.

Difficulty Working with Key Constituencies. The third derailment theme involved the derailed president's difficulty in working with key constituencies. This included issues that caused problems within the president's various constituency groups. The

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constituency groups included the board of trustees, the county commissioner, faculty, and staff. This theme was observed in all four cases.

Failure to communicate effectively. The fourth derailment theme involved the president's failure to communicate effectively. This theme focused on the president's inability to communicate his or her vision effectively. Examples of this included a failure to include enough stakeholders in decisions and simply not communicating and meeting enough. This theme was observed in only one of the four cases.

Flawed Selection Process. The fifth derailment theme involved the perception of participants that the presidential selection process was flawed. There was a perception that the college did not utilize the level of time and collaboration required to select the best leader. This theme was observed in only one of the four cases. Table 3 presents a summary of these themes.

CHAPTER V

SUMMARY, DISCUSSION, CONCLUSIONS

This study was an effort to expand the leadership derailment literature using the

conceptual framework from Leslie and Van Velsor's (1996) study of leadership

derailment in the corporate sector. In particular this study attempted to expand the

literature related to leadership in community college settings. This qualitative, multiple

case study at four community colleges sought to identify common derailment themes and

events that led to presidential derailments, and to compare derailment themes in higher

education and for-profit companies.

Within the framework of Leslie and Van Velsor's (1996) conceptual framework,

results of 16 interviews, field notes, and a review of related documents were analyzed and

grouped into themes. Once the themes from the collegiate case studies were compiled

and organized, the themes were compared against the four themes from Leslie and Van

Velsor's (1996) research.

This research was guided by three research questions:

1. What are the factors that led to the derailment of the community college

   president?

2. What events led to the derailment of the president?

3. What relationship, if any, may be found between derailment factors emerging

   from previous Center for Creative Leadership research and factors emerging

   from this study?

Summary of the Findings

In order to address the research question 1, an inductive data analysis process was used to analyze the interviews. Data were coded and analyzed by institution and then analyzed across cases. From the four cases that were studied, five themes of derailment were identified. The derailment themes included the problems with interpersonal relationships, failure to adapt to the institutional culture, difficulty working with key constituencies, failure to communicate effectively, and flawed search process.   The themes and the frequency with which they were observed are as follows.

Problems with Interpersonal Relationships. The first derailment theme involved problems with interpersonal relationships. This included behavior that created conflict or problems between a leader and their campus constituencies. Examples included stubbornness, aloofness, demanding, and bullying behaviors. This theme was observed in three of the four case studies.

Failure to Adapt to the Institutional Culture. The second derailment theme involved a failure to adapt to the culture of the institution or the surrounding community. This theme included problems with derailed presidents following long term presidents, not understanding power structures of the college or the community, and failing to assimilate to the culture before making changes. This theme was observed in all four cases.

Difficulty Working with Key Constituencies. The third derailment theme involved the derailed president's difficulty in working with key constituencies. This included issues that caused problems within the president's various constituency groups. The

constituency groups included the board of trustees, the county commissioner, faculty, and staff. This theme was observed in all four cases.

Failure to communicate effectively. The fourth derailment theme involved the president's failure to communicate effectively. This theme focused on the president's inability to communicate his or her vision effectively. Examples of this included a failure to include enough stakeholders in decisions and simply not communicating and meeting enough. This theme was observed in only one of the four cases.

Flawed Selection Process. The fifth derailment theme involved the perception of participants that the presidential selection process was flawed. There was a perception that the college did not utilize the level of time and collaboration required to select the best leader. This theme was observed in only one of the four cases.

With respect to research question 2, data were analyzed from the interviews and public documents related to the derailments. The specific events that precipitated each derailment varied, but each critical event was related to the derailment themes found through the interview process.

In the first case, Community College A, there was no one particular happening or event that led to the president's derailment. Rather, the end occurred after repeated problems in dealing with an overpowering micromanaging board.   The derailed president continually had problems keeping a healthy balance with the board of trustees. Two members of the board were micromanaging and questioning the derailed president's decisions and finally it ended up as a situation in which the president could no longer work. Three decisions or 'events' that were mentioned in the interviews were; the faculty salary negotiations that the derailed president endorsed but the board rejected, the

hiring of a contractor for remodeling of a new building, and the hiring of a new nursing dean. The accumulation of the micromanaging from the board finally forced the derailed president to leave.

In the second case study, Community College B, one specific event was the main cause for the derailment. The public (televised) debate over settlement money between the derailed president and the county commissioner, which relates to two of the themes found in this case: difficulty working with key constituencies (the county commissioner) and failure to adapt to the institution (he did not know how powerful the county commissioner was and that the board would not support him).

In the third case there were again a series of events that precipitated the final derailment: nearly half the staff and faculty that she had inherited had either left or she had fired within the first two years of her tenure; she did not renew the contract of a top administrator whose family had very powerful ties to the college; an anonymous e-mail campaign calling for her resignation began; and she did not choose an out of state rather than local construction company for building new dorms. These events mostly relate to the following two themes: failure to adapt to the institutional culture (did not understand the informal power structure and close-knit community) and difficulty working with key constituencies (the staff she let go or left her).

In the fourth case study, again a series of events rather than one specific event caused the president to derail. The derailed president looked at out-of-date policies and faculty job descriptions, and proposed that faculty should actually do what is listed on their job descriptions. These events can be directly linked to the themes of difficulty working with key constituencies (the faculty) and failure to adapt to the institutional

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culture (not understanding the power of the faculty and how change was managed in the past).

To answer research question 3, derailment themes found by Leslie and Van Velsor (1996) in the corporate sector were directly compared to derailment themes discovered in the present study in the community college environment. There were two derailment themes that were common to both the community college environment and the corporate environment. These themes were problems with interpersonal relationships and inability to change or adapt during a transition which was named failure to adapt to the institutional culture in this study.

Three derailment themes were unique to the community college environment. These three themes were a difficulty working with key constituencies, failure to communicate effectively, and flawed search process.

Discussion of the Findings

This study examined the factors and events associated with the derailment of community college presidents. The framework that was utilized for this study was taken from the Center for Creative Leadership's research on executive derailment (Leslie & Van Velsor, 1996). The findings for this study supported two of the four themes for executive derailment: *Problems with Interpersonal relationships and Inability to change or adapt during a transition*. The study also revealed three unique themes specific to presidential derailments at community colleges: *Difficulty working with key constituencies, Failure to communicate effectively, and a Flawed search process*. While studying these cases, there were also other strong similarities found that are worthy of further discussion.

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Effective leaders are ones who shape the culture and value system of an organization (Barach & Eckhardt, 1996). A notable similarity among all these cases was that each of the derailed presidents followed a long term well-liked president. In case A, the previous president had been there for fifteen years, in case B twelve years, in case C twenty-eight years, and in case D twenty plus (eight at president) years. This similarity tied in strongly with the theme of failure to adapt to the institutional culture. It seems that the presidents preceding the derailed president created certain long-standing cultures in which the new (derailed) presidents found it difficult to adapt. Furthermore, because of their failure to adapt to the institutional culture the derailed presidents were unable to establish legitimacy. Bornstein (2003) states that, "without legitimacy, a presidency is doomed" (p.xi). Also according to Bornstein's research, legitimacy is threatened by six factors, one of which is lack of cultural fit. The theme of *failure to adapt to the institutional culture* was found to be a key issue with each of the derailed president's in this study.

Along with *failure to adapt to the institutional culture*, *difficulty working with key constituencies* was another theme found in every single case. The ability to lead and work with a diverse group of constituents is arguably one of the most important and challenging facets of a college president's job (Bogue, 1994; Bornstein, 2003). Bogue (1994) asserted that the college president's responsibility to competing stakeholders is one of the unique factors of higher education leadership. All of the derailed presidents in this study had problems working with at least one major constituency group. In each one of these cases the president was unable to build a strong enough relationship with their board of trustees to save their jobs. The nature of the relationship between the board and

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the president makes it essential that the relationship is mutually beneficial. Michael, Schwartz and Balraj (2001) found that board members expect presidents to be able to cultivate a healthy relationship with the board and the chair. In order to create relationships of trust and influence that help the president build social capital (developing legitimacy), relationships with a variety of stakeholders must be nurtured. Unfortunately, in all of these cases, the presidents just did not work well with faculty, staff, board members or a powerful community member. When problems arose that threatened their presidencies, they clearly did not have the necessary social capital to weather the storm.

Finally, another notable commonality in three of these cases is the issue of ethics. In many instances of derailment, one may think the leader probably did something wrong or acted unethically in some way, thus causing their derailment. There are definitely enough news stories about unethical business leaders as well has higher education officials to support this notion. However, in these four community college cases, the researcher found the opposite. In these cases, the leader was supporting, making decisions, acting on what he or she believed was right. Unfortunately, because these leaders did not garner enough support or gather consensus from the political power that be, they were stopped from continuing their good work. It was also surprising to the researcher how many positive comments were given by participants regarding the derailed presidents and how many good things each accomplished through out their short tenures.

Methodological Issues

The use of multiple case study methodology was well suited for the present study. The combination of interviews, field notes, and document reviews provided an in-depth

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perspective of factors associated with presidential derailments in community colleges. However, two issues related to the methodology presented challenges to both the collection and reporting of the data required for this study.

The first issue relates to the collection of data that was considered by participants to be highly sensitive. The research team of McCosker, Barnard, and Gerber (2001) examined possible reactions when studying topics that were subject to controversy. They asserted that there are many topics that "within specific cultural and social context are 'sensitive'. Topics may be defined as 'sensitive' if they are private, stressful or sacred, and discussion tends to generate an emotional response." They found that studying sensitive topics creates methodological and technical issues, such as "mistrust, concealment, and dissimulation between the researcher and participants" (paragraph 4).

This study involved issues that arise when dealing with such sensitive material. Despite the confidentiality and anonymity of the interviews, the politically sensitive nature of the circumstances involving presidential derailments resulted in participants fearing repercussions that could result from participation in this study. This fear prevented some individuals from participating and caused hesitancy to fully disclose their opinions. Several times there were comments made during interviews in which participants said statements such as "I am not going to say anymore; I better not go on." Other examples of the sensitive nature of this study are statements such as "He (derailed president) is under a nondisclosure clause with the college so this really needs to be off the record."

The present study encountered problems with incomplete data or occasionally missing data because the participants were unwilling to share feelings and experiences.

The sensitive nature of presidential derailments led to a reluctance of certain individuals to participate. Of all the individuals approached for interviews, the most hesitant were members of the governing boards of the universities under investigation. Of the board members contacted, only three were willing to participate. One group of trustees could not participate on the advice of counsel, as legal matters were currently being mediated between the board and the derailed president.

The second methodological issue involved presentation of the findings from the document reviews, especially information from local newspapers and publications directly related to higher education. The document review provided a substantial body of information that confirmed the derailment themes gleaned from the personal interviews. However, providing specific quotations from or citations from many of these documents would result in a breach in the promise of confidentiality provided to each participant.

There is an increasing risk of a breach of confidentiality that could damage or embarrass participants in a case study that involves public information. There are increasing capabilities for individuals to link information across multiple sources found on the Internet (e.g., college documents, newspaper articles) (Citro, Ilgen, & Marrett, 2003). As a result, citations for the documents used in this case study have been withheld.

Despite the complicated nature associated with research that deals with sensitive issues, the sample in the present study was sufficient in number. In addition, the sample represented the population well.

Conclusions

Three conclusions may be drawn from this research. First, this study suggests that the factors that are associated with derailment in higher education transcend

institutional context. Just as the departures of a corporate executive can irreparably damage a business, the sudden resignations and dismissals of college presidents can damage the reputation and fracture the constituencies of higher education institutions. The derailment factors uncovered in this research transcend the context of this study and apply to both the for-profit arena and institutions of higher education.

Second, the research indicates that college presidents need to possess not only the traditional recognized management skills to perform their jobs, but they must also possess the more difficult to measure relational skills, legitimacy, and political savvy to allow them to stay in their positions long enough to effectively lead the institution forward. It is important that these leaders be able to understand who the power brokers are and create mutually beneficial relationships with all constituencies.

Finally, one of the major reasons that the Center for Creative Leadership focused on derailment research was to improve leadership development, thereby creating more effective leaders (Leslie & Van Velsor, 1996; Lombardo & Eichinger, 1992). By understanding the factors related to presidential derailments at these four community colleges, current or aspiring presidents and governing boards may be able to identify possible derailment behaviors and work to correct those behaviors before they lead to a derailment. Preventing president derailments would benefit the institution by saving limited time and resources and steering clear of negative public relations incidents which detract resources away from the educational pursuits of the institution but also eat away at the confidence of the institution's various constituency groups.

Implications for Practice

Board of trustees/ State governing boards.

1. Boards should ensure that they have worked closely with college faculty, staff, and administration about the type of leader they want. They should make sure that if they want a leader who will be a 'change agent' that they give him/her the opportunity and support needed to make change occur. However, if they really do not want change they need to look for someone who will be similar to the previous leader. The Boards need to do an honest assessment of what the college needs and wants are prior to initiating a search. It is essential that a wide variety of people be contacted about the disposition, communication skills, and leadership skills of the selected candidate. Doing an internal assessment initially could help to ensure that the chosen leader will be a good fit for the culture and mission of the college. Finally, the board needs to communicate well with the candidates regarding the culture of the institution and the power structure of the institution.

Sitting college presidents and aspiring college presidents.

1. College presidents should understand and value the culture and mission of the institution for which they serve. College presidents should take care that their value systems are congruent with those of the institution. They need to do their best to understand not only the culture of the institution but that of the community as well. Those aspiring to become college presidents need to do their homework on not only the institution they may be joining but on the leader who is leaving or has left. What was his/her management style, how did change occur, will the new leader be able to work for change and be accepted into the culture.

2. College presidents and those aspiring to the presidency should work hard to establish positive interpersonal relationships with board members, faculty, and other important key constituencies to ensure that they have a well of good faith to draw upon should their leadership come in to question. When presidents have established these relationships, it is more likely that people will come to their aid and work with them knowing that their intentions are for the good of the organization.

3. College presidents should remember the importance of politics. They need to understand the importance of influence, alliance, and leverage. Community college presidents need to know who has the power, who is friends with who, and what is the best way to work with all the constituencies to do what is best for the college.

Recommendations for Future Research

This study should be replicated at other community colleges that have experienced a presidential derailment to confirm the findings of this study. Further research is also needed on presidential derailments at the different types of institutions based on the Carnegie classifications to see if derailment themes are consistent among various types of institutions or if unique themes emerge based on the type of campus the president leads.

Initiating a study which included interviewing the derailed presidents themselves would be an interesting study. Researching the derailed presidents' backgrounds and future career paths led the researcher to ascertain that none of these presidents were hired at other institutions as the leader of the institution. Rather, two had not found employment and two had gone back to being vice presidents at other institutions. A future study could examine the professional problems that occur after a derailment.

In addition, extending the current research and examining the complex relationship between board governance and presidential leadership would be an interesting study. Perhaps looking at training of boards, differences in term limits, and political parties and how each effects presidential derailment.

The complex nature of the college presidency calls for leaders that are flexible, creative and can draw on a wide variety of experiences. The more diverse experience an individual or team has, the more that individual or team will be able to draw on its behavioral complexity. Hooijberg and Quinn (1992) suggested that behaviorally complex leaders are more effective, cognitively complex and are able to perform a diverse set of roles and skills. The more variety a person has had in his/her career, the more resources he/she will have developed that can then be drawn upon during times of crisis. It would be interesting to conduct further research on the behavioral complexity of derailed presidents to see if certain types of experience or lack of experience in general had a relationship to one's derailments.

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APPENDICES

Appendix A

Interview Protocol

Date:

Time:

Location of interview:

Interview participant:

Job/Position of participant:

Description of the study (to be read aloud to the interview participant):

"The purpose of this study is to describe the factors associated with presidential derailment at community colleges. This study involves five community colleges. I will be interviewing sixteen separate individuals. The raw data from these interview sessions will be collected and placed in a locked, secure office on the campus at Pellissippi State Community College. To ensure confidentiality, all individual and institutional names (including location) will be changed in the final presentation of the data. The taped recorded interview should last approximately one hour."

At this point, the interview participant should read and sign the consent form.

Questions:

1) "What are the factors associated with presidential derailment (at your institution)?

2) What events may have occurred that contributed to or influenced the departure of the past president?

3) Is there anything else related to the departure of the president that you would like to tell me?

Appendix B

SAMPLE LETTER TO PARTICIPANTS

(DATE)
(NAME)
(ADDRESS)

Dear Participant,

I am a doctoral student in Higher Education Administration at the University of Tennessee, and I am conducting a doctoral dissertation study exploring factors associated with community college presidential derailments. My study specifically focuses on presidents who leave the college within the first five years of their presidency.

The purpose of this letter is to invite you to participate in my study. **Current president name** has given me permission to use **institution** in my study.

Current president name suggested that I contact you for an interview since you served on the Board when **Derailed president name** was at **institution**. The interview should last approximately one hour. With permission, the interviews will be audio-taped and then transcribed.

Upon completion of the transcription, I will send you a copy, if requested. This would afford you an opportunity to insure that the transcript is a faithful report of your interview. Your anonymity, as well as that of the institution and the other participants, will be assured by the use of pseudonyms and the focus on themes rather than specific institutions.

The risks to the participants are expected to be minimal. Participants will be community college administrators, board members, and faculty members who are familiar with the former president's derailment.

I will contact you by phone on **date** to see if you are willing to participate in the study. If you are interested in participating, we will schedule a time that is mutually convenient for an interview.

Thank you for your time and consideration. I look forward to speaking with you soon.

Sincerely,

Leigh Anne Touzeau
University of Tennessee
Doctoral candidate

FORM B APPLICATION

All applicants are encouraged to read the Form B guidelines. If you have any questions as you develop your Form B, contact your Departmental Review Committee (DRC) or Research Compliance Services at the Office of Research.

FORM B

IRB # _____

Date Received in OR _____

THE UNIVERSITY OF TENNESSEE

Application for Review of Research Involving Human Subjects

I. IDENTIFICATION OF PROJECT

1. **Principal Investigator Co-Principal Investigator:**
    Leigh Anne Touzeau; 3717 Hackworth Road
    Knoxville, TN 37931
    latouzeau@pstcc.edu (865) 539-7013

    Faculty Advisor:
    Dr. E. Grady Bogue; 319 A Claxton Complex; The University of Tennessee, Knoxville;
    Knoxville, TN 37996
    bogue@utk.edu; (865) 974-6140

    Department:
    Educational Psychology and Counseling; 525A Claxton Complex; Knoxville, TN 37996 (865) 974-8145

2. **Project Classification:** Dissertation

3. **Title of Project:** A Study of Presidential Derailment in Community Colleges

4. **Starting Date:** Upon IRB Approval

5. **Estimated Completion Date:** November 2010

6. **External Funding**: N/A

II. PROJECT OBJECTIVES

The purpose of this study is to explore the factors associated with derailment of presidents at public community colleges. For this study, a "derailed president" is defined as a sitting university president who departs his or her position non-voluntarily before he or she has completed five years of work. Previous research on executive derailment has focused on for-profit leaders. One study (Leslie & Van Velsor, 1996) suggested four themes that were associated with derailment in the for-profit sector: problems with interpersonal relationships; failure to meet business objectives; inability to build and lead a team; and, inability to change or adapt during transition. Little research has been conducted focusing on derailment in education in general, and no relevant research on derailment has been conducted in higher education.

III. DESCRIPTION AND SOURCE OF RESEARCH PARTICIPANTS

1. The four case studies will involve in-depth interviews of at least four persons on each campus. These participants must have intimate knowledge of the factors and events associated with the derailment. The participants will include the sitting president, a second senior or executive level administrative officer, a member of the institution's governing board, and a faculty member familiar with the derailment situation. In addition to the interviews, the researcher will utilize observational notes from the interviews and document review for data collection.

2. The researcher will utilize the *Chronicle of Higher Education* and other higher education materials to develop a list of community colleges that have experienced a derailment within the past seven years. Another source to be utilized will be the Association of American Community Colleges President, Dr. George Boggs.

3. Once sites have been identified, the researcher will contact the sitting president to receive permission to conduct the study on their campus. A letter of permission will be utilized for this process.

4. The participating sites must have experienced a presidential derailment within the past seven years. Four participants from each site will be interviewed, bringing the total number of participants to at least sixteen. The number of participants might exceed sixteen, as the researcher will employ the concept of chaining should any of those initially interviewed indicate that there might be others having intimate knowledge of the derailment.

IV. METHODS AND PROCEDURES

The researcher will utilize in-depth interviews, observation, and document reviews for data collection. In-depth interviews will be conducted for each campus case study. At least sixteen interviews will take place for this study. The concept of chaining will be utilized should any of those initially interviewed indicate that there are others having intimate knowledge of the derailment.

The interviews will last approximately one hour.

Three questions will guide the interviews. The questions are as follows:
1. What factors did you perceive as contributing to the departure of the derailed president?
2. What events may have occurred that contributed to or influenced the departure of the past president?
3. Is there anything else related to the departure of the president that you would like to tell me?

Each interview will be taped and then transcribed. Observational notes will also be collected to provide relevant information related to pauses, body language, gestures, or any other action that cannot be detected by the audio tape. Document reviews will consist of any newspaper stories, trustee or board meeting minutes and proceedings, or journal articles that relate to the derailment. Each participant will be assured that their responses will remain confidential during this study. All participants will sign an Informed Consent Form prior to each interview. All research data and findings from the study will be locked in the Office of Enrollment Services at Pellissippi State Community College. Only the researcher (Leigh Anne Touzeau) and Dr. E. Grady Bogue will have access to the research material. All of the research data will be destroyed once the study has been completed.

The data will be analyzed using a qualitative, inductive process. Transcripts and observation notes will be read and re-read; patterns and themes will be identified across and within the interview transcripts; data will be coded for themes; and comparisons will be made in respect to themes.

V. SPECIFIC RISKS AND PROTECTION MEASURES

Risks to the participants are minimal. Participants may withdraw from the study at any time. Participants in the study will be community college staff, faculty, administrators, and board members that were involved with the university at the time of the derailment. All involved will be granted confidentiality. Only the researcher, Leigh Anne Touzeau, and Dr. E. Grady Bogue will have access to the research data. Each research participant will be asked to sign an Informed Consent Form to ensure their right to privacy. Each participant will be able to terminate their involvement at any time during the study.

VI. BENEFITS

This study will initiate research on the derailment behavior of community college presidents. It will extend derailment research begun in the corporate sector, and it will provide a complimentary examination of whether the derailment factors found in this study have a relationship with those uncovered in corporate research. The research can also be used to help boards and state agencies identify derailment behaviors in their current presidents, and these organizations could possibly conduct an intervention.

VII. METHODS FOR OBTAINING "INFORMED CONSENT" FROM PARTICIPANTS
All research participants will be asked to sign Informed Consent Forms. Before the personal interviews begin, the researcher will read the content of the Informed Consent Form and ask each participant to sign it. A copy of this signed form will be given to each participant. (A copy of the form is attached.)

VIII. QUALIFICATIONS OF THE INVESTIGATOR(S) TO CONDUCT RESEARCH
The researcher is enrolled as a doctoral student for the Doctor of Philosophy in Education degree. The researcher has taken a course in qualitative research methods. The researcher is also being advised by a faculty member who is well-versed in qualitative research. Finally, the researcher has conducted much study into the body of contemporary derailment research.

IX. FACILITIES AND EQUIPMENT TO BE USED IN THE RESEARCH
Interviews will take place at a location that is convenient for each participant. In many cases, the interviews will take place at their institution. All research data will be stored in a locked cabinet in the office of the Assistant Vice President for Enrollment Services at Pellissippi State Community College.

X. RESPONSIBILITY OF THE PRINCIPAL/CO-PRINCIPAL INVESTIGATOR(S)

The following information must be entered verbatim into this section:

By compliance with the policies established by the Institutional Review Board of The University of Tennessee the principal investigator(s) subscribe to the principles stated in "The Belmont Report" and standards of professional ethics in all research, development, and related activities involving human subjects under the auspices of The University of Tennessee. The principal investigator(s) further agree that:

   1. Approval will be obtained from the Institutional Review Board prior to instituting any change in this research project.

   2. Development of any unexpected risks will be immediately reported to Research Compliance Services.

   3. An annual review and progress report (Form R) will be completed and submitted when requested by the Institutional Review Board.

   4. Signed informed consent documents will be kept for the duration of the project and for at least three years thereafter at a location approved by the Institutional Review Board.

XI. SIGNATURES

ALL SIGNATURES MUST BE ORIGINAL. The Principal Investigator should keep the original copy of the Form B and submit a copy with original signatures for review. Type the name of each individual above the appropriate signature line. Add signature lines for all Co-Principal Investigators, collaborating and student investigators, faculty advisor(s), department head of the Principal Investigator, and the Chair of the Departmental Review Committee. The following information should be typed verbatim, with added categories where needed:

Principal Investigator: Leigh Anne Touzeau

 Signature: _____   Date: _____

Faculty Advisor (if any): Dr. E. Grady Bogue

 Signature: _____   Date: _____

XII. DEPARTMENT REVIEW AND APPROVAL

The application described above has been reviewed by the IRB departmental review committee and has been approved. The DRC further recommends that this application be reviewed as:

[ ] Expedited Review -- Category(s): _____

OR

[ ] Full IRB Review

Chair, DRC: _____

Signature: _____

Date: _____

Department Head: _____

Signature: _____

Date: _____

Protocol sent to Research Compliance Services for final approval on (DATE): _____

Approved:
Research Compliance Services
Office of Research
1534 White Avenue

Signature: _____

Date: _____

For additional information on Form B, contact the Office of Research Compliance Officer or by phone at (865) 974-3466.

Appendix D

INFORMED CONSENT STATEMENT

Presidential Derailment: Case studies of community college presidents

INTRODUCTION

You have been invited to participate in a study on presidential derailments. The purpose of this study is to describe the factors associated with presidential derailments in community college settings.

INFORMATION ABOUT PARTICIPANTS' INVOLVEMENT IN THE STUDY

You will be asked to participate in an in-depth, open-ended interview. The interviews should last approximately one hour. The interviews will be audio taped and then transcribed. The researcher will send you a copy of the transcription, if you request. In the data analysis stage, you will be asked to review the themes that emerged from the interview data to see if these themes match your memory of the events surrounding the derailment.

RISKS

Risks to the participants are expected to be minimal. Participants will be community college administrators, faculty, and board members that are familiar with the past presidential derailment at their institution.

_____ Participant's initials

BENEFITS

This study will initiate research on the derailment behavior of community college presidents. It will extend derailment research begun in the corporate sector, and it will provide a complimentary examination of whether the derailment factors found in this study have a relationship with those uncovered in corporate research. The research can also be used to help boards and state agencies identify derailment behaviors in their current presidents, and these organizations could possibly conduct an intervention.

CONFIDENTIALITY

The data collected will be kept confidential. Data will be stored securely and will only be made available to the researcher and her major professor. No reference will be made in oral or written reports that could link participants to the study.

CONTACT INFORMATION

If you have any questions or concerns during the study, you may contact the researcher, Leigh Anne Touzeau, at 3717 Hackworth Road, Knoxville, TN 37931, and (865) 539-7013. If you have questions about your rights as a participant, you may contact the Office of Research Compliance Officer at the University of Tennessee, Knoxville at (865) 974-3466.

PARTICIPATION

Your participation in this study is voluntary. You may decline to participate at any stage of the research without any penalty. If you withdraw from the study before data collection has been completed, your data will be returned to you or destroyed.

CONSENT

I have read the above information. I have received a copy of this form. I agree to participate in the study.

Participant's signature_____ Date _____

Investigator's signature_____ Date _____

VITA

Leigh Anne Touzeau was born in Dayton, Ohio and raised in Cleveland, TN after the family moved when she was in elementary school. She graduated from Cleveland High School in 1985. After graduating from The University of Tennessee, Knoxville 1989 with a Bachelor of Arts degree in Marketing, she began work on her Master of Science degree from the University of Tennessee, Knoxville in College Student Personnel.

After earning her Masters' Degree from the University of Tennessee, Knoxville in 1992, she accepted a job with The University of Tennessee as an admissions counselor. Six years later, she applied for and was named the Director of Admissions at Pellissippi State Technical Community College. Throughout her time at Pellissippi State she has gained increasing amounts of responsibility and is now the Assistant Vice President of Enrollment Services for the College.

Throughout her career she was enrolled in graduate courses and received a Specialist in Education (Counseling) in 2000, from the University of Tennessee, Knoxville. In 2006, she enrolled in the Doctoral program in Educational Leadership and Policy Studies. While a student in this program she was published twice in the College and University Journal (an AACRAO publication). She also received a University of Tennessee Citation for Extraordinary Professional Promise in 2007.

Leigh Anne lives in Knoxville, TN, with her husband, Tom, their son, Dan and daughter Maddie.