ABSTRACT

The under representation of females in executive leadership positions in higher education such as president is well documented. Furthermore, the concept of women in leadership roles is new with much of the research taking place from the 1970s to the present. Until that time research on leadership in higher education was almost exclusively from the male perspective. Research regarding leadership and the career pathways females follow to attain leadership positions could benefit all in the higher education arena by introducing a new perspective. Moreover, the style of leadership employed by presidents who are females could help expand the definition of leadership.

The stories described by the participants in this study reveal that leadership is genderless. However, the participants in this study do lean to a particular style of leadership that has been described in the literature as feminine.
The career pathways chosen by the participants in this study as described by one participant, "is no different" from the way males choose to secure executive positions in higher education or any other profession.
Ascension to the Presidency: A Descriptive Study of Female Presidents in the North Carolina Community College System

By

Keith Smith

A dissertation submitted to the Graduate Faculty of North Carolina State University in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the Degree of Doctor of Education

HIGHER EDUCATION ADMINISTRATION

Raleigh

2003

APPROVED BY

Duane H. Akroyd
Chair Advisory of Advisory Committee

Wynetta Y. Lee
Co-Chair of Advisory Committee

Bruce I. Mallette

Crystal Gafford Muhammad
DEDICATION

This dissertation is dedicated to my Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ, my wife, Barbara (the cornerstone of my life), my sons, Joshua Keith and Daniel Jamieson, the North End section of Goldsboro, North Carolina and family and friends who continuously encouraged me.
BIOGRAPHY

Keith Smith, born November 3, 1951, is the son of Willie Elizabeth Smith Boyette and the late Ralph E. Harper of Goldsboro, North Carolina. After earning an A.A.S., Business Administration from Guilford Technical Community College (Jamestown, NC) in 1978, Keith transferred to North Carolina Agricultural and Technical State University (Greensboro, NC) and while working full-time, Keith completed the B.A., Speech and Theater in 1981 and M.S., Education/Educational Media in 1984. In 1985, Keith became employed at Shaw University (Raleigh, NC) where he served initially as an admission counselor. Keith later directed the Upward Bound Program (1987-1991), Intercollegiate Athletics (1991 -1995), and Admissions and Recruitment (1995- 2000) at Shaw University. Keith presently is employed with Nash Community College and serves as Dean for Student Development.

Keith is a member of the North Carolina Community College Student Development Association. Keith also served as president for the National Association of College Deans, Registrars and Admissions Officers (NACDRAO) in 2000.

Keith is married to the former Barbara A. Pullen of Littleton, North Carolina and has two children, Joshua Keith and Daniel Jamieson.
ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

I would like to acknowledge the patience and understanding of my advisory committee: Dr. Wynetta Y. Lee, my co-chairperson (who provided a constant supply of encouragement and understanding of my unique trials and tribulations), Dr. Duane Akroyd, my chair (who came to my rescue), Dr. Bruce Mallette (for his wisdom and words of encouragement), Dr. Crystal Muhammad (who was willing to serve) and a special thanks to Dr. Robert Mayo.
# TABLE OF CONTENTS

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>LIST OF TABLES</th>
<th>Page</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>List of Figures</td>
<td>vii</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

| LIST OF FIGURES | viii |

## 1. INTRODUCTION

Gender Representation in the North Carolina Community College System 5
- Problem Statement 5
- Research Questions 7
- Purpose of Study 7
- Limitations of Research 7
- Definition of Terms 8

## 2. LITERATURE REVIEW

- The Dawning of New Century: North Carolina Community College System (NCCCS) Comprehensive Plan For Administrative Leadership through Diversity Enhancement. A report to the System President 11
- The Responsibility of Community Colleges 12
- Professional Development of Women in Higher Education 13
- The Glass Ceiling 14
- Leadership Characteristics and Leadership Styles 16

## 3. METHODOLOGY

- Participants and Recruitment Process 22
- Participants 22
- Instrumentation 24
- Data Collection Procedures - The Interview 24
- Preparation and Analysis of the Interview 25
- Data - Research Design 25
- Thematic Coding Procedures 27
- Coding Reliability 30
## 4. RESULTS

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Topic</th>
<th>Page</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Presentation of Data</td>
<td>33</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Leadership Issues</td>
<td>33</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Leadership Styles</td>
<td>33</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Reaction of Female Leadership</td>
<td>35</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Male versus Female Leadership</td>
<td>38</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Personal Qualities</td>
<td>40</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Family and Spirituality</td>
<td>40</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Community Involvement</td>
<td>42</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sense of Humor</td>
<td>44</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Work Experiences and Education</td>
<td>45</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Effects of Public Policies</td>
<td>51</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Thematic Synthesis: Pathways to the Presidency</td>
<td>53</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

## 5. DISCUSSION

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Topic</th>
<th>Page</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Limitations of the Present Study</td>
<td>63</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Summary and Suggestions</td>
<td>64</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>For Future Research</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

## REFERENCES

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Page</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>67</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

## APPENDIXES

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Topic</th>
<th>Page</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. IRB</td>
<td>81</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. Participation letter</td>
<td>82</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. Letter of Consent</td>
<td>83</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4. Interview Protocol</td>
<td>84</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5. Quotes Utilize to Formulate</td>
<td>85</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Thematic Categories</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
### LIST OF TABLES

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Chapter 4</th>
<th>Page</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. Ascension to the Presidency</td>
<td>56</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
## LIST OF FIGURES

Chapter 3

1. Conceptual Scheme 29
2. Conceptual Theme and Thematic Categories Used for Coding Participant Notes 31
Chapter 1

INTRODUCTION

Higher education in the United States, the gateway to economic prosperity and quality of life, started as an entity to educate the sons of the elite and privileged (Rippa, 1997). American higher education as borrowed from the English tradition was designed to produce educated gentlemen. In recent years, higher education in the United States has become a model for society that demands parity across gender lines. However, throughout history women have been discriminated against in the field of education as well as in other sectors of society (Marshall & Kasten, 1994). Early patriarchal traditions contribute to the overrepresentation of men in chief executive leadership positions in higher education in comparison to women. In general, leadership positions in education are held by males, with prevailing social perspectives supporting the notion that men belong in those leadership positions (Gupton & Slick, 1996). This phenomenon exists in the corporate setting as well. In the corporate setting in America, women comprise 33 percent of corporate middle management positions. However, only 3 percent of corporate officers of Fortune 500 companies are women and only six companies are led by female chief executive officers (Jones, 2003). In the higher education arena, women have moved

In terms of leadership positions, an Association of Commonwealth Universities (ACU) study (1998) found that women are more likely to succeed as registrars, librarians, or heads of personnel, than if they aspire to be deans or senior administrators. Sexism, lack of qualifications stemming from lack of experience and access to educational resources, the glass ceiling, and lack of networking resources all contribute to the roles women play in the workforce (Curry, Jiobu & Schwirian, 1997). These factors also contribute to the barriers women face as they aspire to move through the ranks to the chief executive level. In addition to those noted above, barriers may include lack of informal networks that influence women’s abilities to obtain opportunities in educational leadership. For instance, the network among men – informally referred to as the “good old boy system” – is strong and although sometimes viewed pejoratively, is often considered a major vehicle used in selecting job candidates (Benton, 1980; Schmuck, 1986). Ramsay (2000) suggests women’s
and men’s different career trajectories are due to women’s lack of insider knowledge and limited opportunities to enter the informal systems for career advancement used for so long and to such good advantage by men. Brunner (1993), in her study of highly successful school superintendents, concludes that females who wish to access power circuits need to be culturally bilingual—i.e. they needed to “speak the language” of those in the male circuits of power (p.198). Despite public policies that attempt to promote equality and remove these traditional barriers within the workplace, women still have difficulty getting ahead.

Public policies such as Affirmative Action, Title VII and Title IX provide assistance for women seeking access to higher education to prepare for leadership positions. Women are taking advantage of these opportunities, as evidenced by increasing enrollments in the nation’s colleges and universities. Not only are women going to college, the number of women who persist to degree completion has steadily risen over the last 30 years and their gains have been substantial in educational opportunities (Norris & Inglehart, 2001). The number of women entering higher education exceeds that of men.

Currently, there are 1,151 community colleges in the United States; 1,075 of these are public institutions controlled by the state or local districts (U.S. Society &
Values, 2002). The North Carolina Community College System (NCCCS), established in 1963, is the third largest in the nation (NCCCS, 2001). This system, through its various programs, serves nearly one million students each year. In curriculum programs, the majority of these students are female. However, the demographics of the faculty and staff that provide services within this system do not reflect the demographics of the constituents served by the NCCCS. Moreover, researchers have argued the North Carolina Community College System still has equity problems, particularly in the representation of women in leadership positions (Somerville, 1996).

Generally, the missions of community colleges express the desire to represent those communities they serve. Nicholas & Oliver (1994) believe these institutions should have leadership reflective of the proportion of women in the communities they serve. They also suggest that the visibility of women in senior administrative positions illustrates the institution’s commitment to diversity in the minds of both the community and the student body. The reality is that executive leadership position role models in higher education are more likely to be men. For women who function as executive administrators in higher education, what career trajectory
leads them to their positions? What are the characteristics of their leadership styles and did public policies benefit them?

**Gender Representation in the North Carolina Community College System**

In 2001, according to the North Carolina Community College’s System Office, the North Carolina Community College System enrolled 244,508 students in its degree granting curriculum programs. Of that population, 60 percent were women and 40 percent were men. Comparatively, the North Carolina Community College System’s workforce consisted of over 12,000 employees. This number included 312 senior administrators who provide leadership for the 59 community colleges in the NCCCS. For purposes of this study, administrators are those individuals who hold the position of dean, vice president, executive vice president, provost, and president. In the North Carolina Community College System, a breakdown of those positions by gender revealed that 34 percent were females and 66 percent were males.

**Problem Statement**

In higher education, 21 percent of the nation’s colleges and universities employ women presidents (American Council on Education, 2002). The knowledge base of organizational and leadership theory in higher education is almost entirely derived from the male perspective (Curry, 2000). Hence,
despite the recent successes of some women, the study of leadership in higher education overwhelmingly reflects the views about males. Thus, while women represent over half of all enrolled students, highly positioned female role models are few. Information is limited about the lessons learned by women, particularly those women in higher education who have reached top-level executive positions never before held by women (McKenney & Cedja, 2000).

Until recently, women’s perspectives were not included in discussions of leadership in higher education. To fill this void, the stories and perspectives of women at the CEO level elucidate paths to successful leadership in higher education.

According to Matusak (2001), the higher one looks in the academy, the fewer women one sees. Maxine Green suggests the only literature available to the women trying to master what is demanded of contemporary leadership consists largely of information gathered by male policy-makers who are presumed experts in theories of leadership (Curry, 2000). As a means to investigate the process of the ascension of women to the community college presidency, this study asks three individuals who have experienced the process to recall their journey in attaining the position. Thus, this research project will add to the body of knowledge that addresses leadership in
higher education by describing the experiences of three female presidents in the North Carolina Community Colleges System.

**Research Questions**

The stories of women who have ascended to the presidency in higher education can add to the construction of how leadership is defined in higher education. Their perspectives will add to the body of knowledge regarding leadership in higher education. With this notion as a guide, this research will describe and analyze the perspectives of three female presidents in the North Carolina Community College System by examining the following research questions:

- What pathways do women take to ascend to the presidency?
- What leadership styles do women employ?

**Purpose of Study**

The purpose of this study is twofold: (a) to describe the pathways that females chose in order to ascend to their position as president of a community college, and (b) to identify the leadership styles these women tend to practice in the North Carolina Community College System. In so doing, this research provides a descriptive analysis of selected female presidents in the North Carolina Community College System.

**Limitations of Research**

As this research focuses solely on the leadership paths and practices of three female presidents of rural community
colleges in the North Carolina Community College System, generalizations will not be made of other female college presidents. Thus, while this study addresses the multiple realities of how leadership is defined in higher education, more work is needed to produce a complete theoretical framework of leadership by females and the pathways they choose to ascend to a position such as president.

Definition of Terms

For the purpose of this study selected terms were defined as follows:

**Leadership** - The representative definitions of leadership are: 1) “interpersonal influence, exercised in a situation, and directed through the communication process, toward the attainment of a specified goal or goals” (Tannenbaum, Weschler, & Massarik, 1961, p.24) and 2) leaders are those who consistently make effective contributions to social order and who are expected and perceived to do so (Hosking, 1988).

**Executive leadership position** - Any female who holds the position of president in a community college.

**Minority** - A minority is a group that has less power than the dominant group (Blackwell, 1991).

**Glass ceiling** - The glass ceiling is a subtle and unconscious discrimination that prevents minorities, in general, and women, in particular, from reaching higher and better-paying
positions for which they are qualified (Curry, Jiobu & Schwirian, 1997).

**Affirmative action** – employment programs required by federal statutes and regulations designed to remedy discriminatory practices in hiring minority group members and to create systems and procedures to prevent future discrimination (Black, 1990).

**Level playing field** – The term “level playing field” has become common in modern English to refer to fair competition particularly in the United States of America (Pinto-Duschinsky, 1997). In this research, the “level playing field” implies that candidates for positions at the executive level in higher education are provided precisely the same treatment and respect afforded to each person who applies for a given position.
Chapter 2

LITERATURE REVIEW

The realities of leadership theory and practice have been influential in determining who may be considered leaders and who may lead (Curry, 2000). An examination of women in leadership from a feminine perspective reveals that a female organizational culture exists (Harris, Smith & Hale, 2002). Within that organizational culture, some studies suggest that ambition, position power, and prestige were less important for women than for men (Helgeson, 1990; Neuse, 1978; Stamm & Ryff, 1984). However, women who have achieved executive positions in education frequently demonstrate a strong desire to succeed and view themselves as leaders despite the dominant presence in this society of white male leadership (Benton, 1980; Pavan, 1989; Swiderski, 1988).

Women are pursuing fields that are traditionally held by males, but often their efforts are met by social barriers. Thus, despite many challenges, women administrators have indicated numerous reasons for wanting to become educational leaders (Ryder, 1994). Some of these reasons include:

• Ability to affect change
• Opportunity for higher status
• Encouragement by mentors to apply for positions
• Capability for leadership
• Opportunity for power

Inadequate training and educational opportunity are frequently among the top explanations cited in the literature for women’s underrepresentation in executive positions in education (Short et al., 1989; Whitecraft & Williams, 1990; Roger & Davis, 1991). To research women’s ascent to leadership positions in higher education, it is necessary to discuss the barriers women face as well as federal and state policies and personal characteristics that have helped them remove these barriers. Therefore, this literature review is organized in the following manner: A report to the North Carolina Community College System’s president; the responsibility of the community college; the glass ceiling, leadership characteristics and leadership styles. This delineation is critical to the development of this research.

The Dawning of a New Century

According to the report, The Dawning of a New Century—North Carolina Community College System (NCCCS) Comprehensive Plan for Administrative Leadership through Diversity Enhancement (1991), disparities in recommendations for the promotion, recruitment, and retention of minorities and women for senior-level administrative staff provided evidence that a gap between women and men in leadership within the NCCCS existed. This report made several recommendations that
suggested the individual colleges in the system should develop schemes that encourage diversity in the senior level administrators’ ranks. Two of these recommendations were: (1) the State Board for Community Colleges (SBCC) should increase funding for enrollment in the Executive Leadership Management Institute, and encourage college presidents to nominate more minorities and women to the Institute, and (2) each college should incorporate, into its Institutional Effectiveness Plan, a leadership mission statement, hiring goals through the year 2002, timeframes and schedule, and monitoring and evaluation procedures.

The Responsibility of Community Colleges

Community colleges have a responsibility to recruit faculty and staff that reflect the community in which they serve (Myran, 1978). For example, one NCCCS community college's mission statement declares that the college:

...does not discriminate in the recruitment of students and employees based on race, color, ethnicity, gender, age, socioeconomic status, and country of origin, disability or religion. Recruitment efforts, both student and employee, focus on attracting a diverse body of applicants that is reflective of the College’s service area. The College seeks to comply with all federal, state and local statutes, regulations and orders, including those that promote equal protection and equal opportunity. (NCC, 2000)

This responsibility is an undertaking that is shared by all of the community colleges within the NCCCS. Nonetheless, in
terms of academic leadership positions, the community colleges do not reflect the demographics of the community in which they serve (Edwards, 2002).

Institutions of higher learning also have a responsibility to provide an atmosphere conducive to professional and academic mentoring in addition to fostering a sense of personal growth and self-worth for all students. For example, in a study of community college presidents, Vaughan (1989) reports that the majority of women presidents had male mentors.

Professional Development of Women in Higher Education

Role models and mentors have been credited for creating avenues for professional development of leaders in organizations. However, leadership initiatives designed specifically for professional development have aided leaders as well.

Brown (2000), in her study of female presidents, reports that her subjects cited the following benefits of professional development: (1) enhanced desire to pursue the presidency, (2) the experience enhanced their self-esteem, (3) provide networking opportunities, and (4) enhanced their professional development. Programs such as leadership institutes produce similar benefits. For example, according to a study by Gorham (2000), participation in the leadership institute entitled
North Carolina Community College Leadership Program (NCCCLP) could produce the following results: (1) develop an awareness of leadership theory, and (2) lead to self-improvement and greater involvement in college affairs and organizations. Conversely, Gorham’s study suggests such an institute could be a waste of time for someone who has had years of experience in middle- to upper-level administration. Research by Morrison (1996) and the Center for Creative Leadership suggest many programs are teaching an old way of leadership. An example, the old way of leadership required people to wait for their leaders and denied most of the knowledge and creativity that is present in every individual in an organization. Many of the leadership development programs have failed to change their educational approach to reflect a different view of leadership and organizational behavior.

The Glass Ceiling

The “glass ceiling” concept can be defined as subtle and unconscious discrimination that prevents women from reaching higher and better paying positions for which they are qualified (Curry, Jiobu, & Schirian 1997, p. 238). The glass ceiling phenomenon theorizes a real, yet invisible, barrier to the advancement of women in their respective organizations (Chiliwniak, 1997). The “glass ceiling” argument holds that women and minorities have not yet advanced to top positions.
because their tenure in the workforce has not been of sufficient length to support such promotion (Morrison, White & Van Velsor, 1992, p.13; and Adams 1993, p.940). Even in the absence of overt and noticeable discrimination, women encounter this “glass ceiling.” The arena of higher education is not excluded from this phenomenon.

Although women have made great strides in obtaining leadership roles in the academic world, many of their gains have been limited to traditionally female-dominated positions such as deans of nursing, home economics, arts and sciences and continuing education (Kaplan & Tinsley, 1989; American Association of University Professors, 1999). It is more common to find larger numbers of women administrators working at Liberal Arts institutions and to find greater numbers of men administrators in comprehensive colleges and universities.

Another aspect of the “glass ceiling” is that women do not look or act the part of being a member of the senior administration (Phillip 1995, p.13; Adams 1993, p.945; and Somerville 1996, p.37). For example, women are often penalized for being childbearing partners; it is simply assumed that they do not advance in the work world because of their frequent absences for family reasons (Schwartz, 1990). Presumably, this penalty has placed limitations on how far women can advance (Swiss & Walker, 1993) and could account for
the underrepresentation of women in the top leadership positions in American colleges and universities (Ross & Green, 1998).

**Leadership Characteristics and Leadership Styles**

Women who have achieved success in educational leadership possess characteristics and demonstrate behaviors that are essential for needed educational reform and the creation of a truly humanistic educational community (Harris, Smith & Hale, 2002). Discussions of leadership offer some form of trait or attribute theory to suggest ways of being and appropriate use of instrumentation to be used under particular sets of circumstances (Curry, 2000). According to Gardner (1990), there are fourteen attributes that formulate a leader. Those attributes are:

- Physical vitality and stamina
- Intelligence and judgment in action
- Willingness to accept responsibility
- Task competence
- Understanding followers and their needs
- Skill in dealing with people
- The need to achieve
- The capacity to motivate
- Courage, resolution, and steadiness
• The capacity to win and hold trust
• The capacity to manage, decide, and set priorities
• Confidence
• Ascendance, dominance, and assertiveness
• Adaptability and flexibility of approach

Leadership is a complex cultural process that can differ across people and historical periods. A problematic issue is that leadership traditionally has been studied using male norms as the standard for behaviors (Chliwniak, 1997). Women community college presidents are in a position to contribute fresh perspectives on leadership within their institutions and society as a whole (Getskow, 1996).

Different leadership styles and their effectiveness have given rise to many theories of leadership (Bennis, 1989; Gardner, 1995). For instance, the trait theory promotes the notion that leaders are born and possess certain physical and personality characteristics that differentiate them from non-leaders (Yukl, 1989). Yukl identified two other leadership theories that might aid this research. Those theories were:

• Behavioral Theories - The behavioral theorists identified determinants of leadership so that people could be trained to be leaders. They developed training programs, such as those at Mercer University's Center for Student Involvement
and Leadership (http://www.mercer.edu/csil/), to change managers’ leadership behaviors and assumed that the best styles of leadership could be learned.

- **Process theories** – The process theorists explain the processes by which relationships develop between leaders and subordinates.

  Only recently have studies of leadership included women or looked specifically at their leadership styles (Bruegman, 1995). Heller (1982) and Shakeshaft (1995) addressed the fact that inclusion of women in leadership studies might challenge and redefine behaviors of those in leadership positions (Dorn, Rourke & Papalewis, 2001).

  According to Rosener (1990), women are more likely to employ a collaborative approach to decision making, resulting in a sharing of power. However, female leaders often find that they have to push more, to show more strength (Haslett et al., 1992; Marshall, 1986), in order to achieve their ends. The 1992 publication, Megatrends for Women, supports and expands the concept of a unique leadership style more prevalent among women. Aburdene and Naisbitt (1992) define women leadership to be a leadership personality that reflects women’s values and behavioral characteristics. These researchers identified 25 behaviors that characterize women’s leadership and have clustered these behaviors into six central
patterns identified as: behaviors that empower, restructure, teach, provide role models, encourage openness, and stimulate questioning.

Gillett-Karam (1994) framed leadership by women in the community college setting in four ways: taking appropriate risks to bring about change; providing caring and respect for individual differences; acting collaboratively; and building trust. Gillett-Karam’s study suggests that for women, effective leadership is more behaviorally derived and leadership is subject to the dynamics of interaction of people and institutions. Additionally, the study encourages college leaders to bring shared leadership and accountability into focus within their organizations.

Although women are now achieving representation in leadership positions in higher education, the dominant modes of leadership remain masculine (Porat, 1991; Moke, 1996). Contrarily, Birnbaum (1992) viewed leaders as alike and genderless.

As theories develop surrounding the issue of male versus female leadership, leadership styles identified as men’s style and women’s style have emerged. Billard (1992) argues that women are more likely to manage in an interactive style, encouraging participation, sharing power and information and enhancing the self-worth of others. The literature also
suggests that boards of trustees are looking for a collaborative leadership style and they believe that presidents who communicate with faculty and staff and involve them in decision-making will create a happy organization (Barwick, 2002).

Growe and Montgomery (2003) identified nine leadership styles dominant in women leaders in higher education. These styles appear to support the concepts of the trait, process, and behavioral theories. These styles are as follow:

1. Emphasize relationships, sharing and process (Chliwiniak, 1997).
2. Focus on instructional leadership (Conner, 1992).
4. Interact more with teachers, students, parents colleagues, community, etc. more than men (Porat, 1991).
7. Encourage feeling of self-worth, active participation, and sharing of power and information that helps to transform people’s self interest into organizational goals (Getskow, 1996).
8. Influence teachers to use more desirable methods (Ryder, 1994).
9. Emphasize the importance of curriculum and instruction more than men (Tallerico & Burstyn, 1996).
Chapter 3

METHODOLOGY

Participants and Recruitment Process

The North Carolina Community College System is comprised of 59 community colleges. Based on information ascertained from the North Carolina Community College System, at the time of this study, nine female presidents were identified within the system. Thus, the potential sample size was nine (NCCCS, 2003).

Prior to beginning this research, a request for review of research involving human subjects was filed with the North Carolina State University Institutional Review Board (IRB) (See Appendix I).

An explanation of the research was mailed to the prospective participants to solicit their involvement (See Appendix II). Likewise, to provide a full understanding of the process and intent behind the research, a letter of consent was also sent to each potential participant (See Appendix III). It was a goal of the researcher to interview at least six of the nine presidents. However, because of time constraints and scheduling conflicts, three presidents ultimately consented to be interviewed.

Participants

It was also a goal of this researcher to get the perspectives of each president. Each president was given a
pseudonym (i.e., ‘Alpha,’ ‘Beta,’ and ‘Chi’) to protect her identity and maintain confidentiality. Attention was paid that no identifying remarks were made in the interview that would identify the participants. Each participant was given the option to review the written transcript of her recorded interview to insure confidentiality and accuracy of statements. With this in mind, what follows are brief biographical sketches of the three study participants.

**Participant Alpha:** Alpha holds a doctoral degree. She has served as president of a community college for less than five years. Her institution is located in a rural environment and has a headcount of less than 2000 students. She is affiliated with numerous professional organizations and has attended at least two leadership initiative institutes.

**Participant Beta:** Beta holds a doctoral degree. At the time of the interview, she had held the position of president at her institution for less than five years. Beta is president of a community college in a rural setting with a headcount of less than 2000 students. Beta is affiliated with numerous civic and professional organizations, serves as board member on several community agencies and has been recognized for the services she has rendered to the community. Beta has participated in at least three leadership training initiatives for senior administrators.
Participant Chi: Chi holds a doctoral degree. She has been president at her institution for less than five years. Chi’s institution is also located in a rural setting and has a headcount of less than 2000 students. Likewise, Chi has participated in leadership initiative institutes.

Instrumentation

Data were collected by utilizing an interview protocol instrument (See Appendix IV). As per Creswell (1994), the interview protocol utilized included the following components: (a) heading, (b) instruction to the interviewer (opening statements), (c) the key research questions to be asked, (d) probes to follow key questions, (e) transitions messages for the interviewer, (f) space for recording the interviewer’s comments, and (g) space in which the researcher records reflective notes.

Data Collection Procedures

The Interview

The data for this research were gathered by utilizing the interview process. In an interview, respondents, in this case female community college presidents, were asked to clarify or expand their responses, making data from an interview richer and more complete than that which can be obtained from a questionnaire (Slavin, 1992).
Each participant completed a 30- to 75-minute interview. Interviews were conducted by one researcher (the present author) and were carried out at the institution of two the presidents and via the telephone with the third. The interviews were audio recorded.

Each interview was semi-structured, using six open-ended questions and both planned and unplanned prompts. The questions in this research were derived from the published literature regarding women’s perceptions of their pathways to leadership positions (Heller, 1982). These questions and statements were developed to gather information about the presidents’ thoughts, feelings, and perspectives as related to leadership practices, significant life experiences, and career choices. The questions began to probe in a broader context and subsequently developed into more individualized questions, at the discretion of the interviewer.

**Preparation and Analysis of the Interview Data**

**Research Design**

This research utilized a qualitative design. In qualitative research, the intent is to explore important social phenomena (Slavin, 1992). According to Slavin, qualitative research is also designed to produce information on a given setting in its full richness and complexity. The qualitative design can also be defined as an inquiry process...
of understanding a social problem based on building a complex, holistic picture, formed with words that report detailed views of informants (Creswell, 1994).

Grounded theory is typically presented as an approach to doing qualitative research (Haig, 1995) in that its procedures are neither statistical, nor quantitative in some other way.

Using a grounded theory design, this study describes and analyzes the perspectives of three female presidents in the North Carolina Community College System. The grounded theory method of qualitative research is an inductive approach that uses a systematic set of procedures to arrive at a theory about basic social processes. The assumptions for using the grounded theory method are:

1. An exhaustive literature review is not done to allow theory to emerge directly from the data and remain grounded in the data.

2. Literature is reviewed continuously throughout data collection and analysis.

3. Sample includes people who are experiencing the social process being investigated.

4. Must be used to provide the reader with steps in the process and the logic of the method.

5. Data are compared continuously with other data (constant comparison method) to detect emerging
categories and themes and to direct the data collection process (Creswell, 1998).

The aim of this approach is to discover underlying social forces that shape human behavior by means of interviews with open-ended questions (LoBiondo-Wood & Haber, 1994). When describing the findings, descriptive language is used. When this is done, theories are generated, with the help of interpretive procedures as defined above, before being finally written and presented.

To provide a better understanding, a conceptual model (see Figure 1.) has been constructed. A conceptual framework explains, either graphically or in narrative form, the main dimensions to be studied – the key factor, or variables – and the presumed relationships among them (Creswell, 1994).

**Thematic Coding Procedures**

Preparation and analysis of the interview data generally followed guidelines outlined by Creswell (1998). The standard format for grounded theory research is as follows:

- **Open coding** – the formulation of information about a phenomenon being studied.
- **Axial coding** – the assembling of data in new ways after open coding.
Selective coding – the researcher identifies a “story line” (p.57) and writes a story that integrates the categories in the axial coding model. Using codes as described here, the researcher may develop and visually portray a conditional matrix that elucidates the social, historical, and economic conditions influencing the central phenomenon (Creswell, 1998).

Each interview was transcribed verbatim from the audiotape using a standard word processing program. Personal names were omitted during transcription. The investigator read each transcript multiple times and highlighted all quotes that appeared to be information-rich. First, potential quotes were those judged to pertain directly to the topic areas being probed. Purely social or extraneous comments and redundant remarks were excluded as were details within a narrative piece that did not provide new or pertinent information.
Figure 1. Conceptual Scheme

Ascension to the Presidency: A Descriptive Study of Female Presidents in the North Carolina Community College System
Selected quotes were then transferred onto index cards (one quote per card). Participant initials and the page number of the transcript were placed onto the back of each card to facilitate referencing the transcript when necessary. Information that appeared to be thematically related was sorted together. The original sort was done using a “bottom-up” procedure; in other words, the categories were developed from the data cards themselves. For example, a preliminary category called “family” was created, and included quotes such as “family support,” and “education was important in my family.”

Each index card was placed in only one category. Preliminary categories were modified or collapsed to eliminate redundancy. Ultimately, six thematic categories were preserved. These categories contained 103 individual quotes (see Appendix V), with all three of the participants represented (though not equally). These final thematic categories are presented in Figure 2.

Coding Reliability

Reliability refers to the extent to which a study can be replicated (LeCompte & Preissle, 1993). In a qualitative study, replication can only be approximated because unique situations cannot be reconstructed.
FIGURE 2.

**Conceptual theme and thematic categories used for coding participant notes**

Conceptual themes are located on the second tier.

Thematic categories are located on the third tier.
According to Creswell (1994), it is important to address the concept of reliability and frame this within the procedures that have emerged from qualitative writing. The procedure of coding as explained in the preparation of the data section allowed this researcher to place information into six thematic categories. These themes were collapsed into three conceptual themes. Central to reliability is interrater reliability. This is one means of determining the extent to which sets of meanings held by multiple observers are congruent enough to describe and arrive at inferences about phenomena in the same way (Lecompte & Preissle, 1993). Consequently, two behavioral scientists unfamiliar with this study were asked to group 103 quotes from index cards and group them into the three conceptual thematic categories: leadership issues, personal qualities and work experiences/education. The behavioral scientists agreed with the researcher 90 percent of the time on how the data were to be categorized.
Chapter 4

RESULTS

Presentation of Data

This chapter illustrates the stories told by three female presidents of North Carolina community colleges. These presidents were asked to respond to a series of probing questions that addressed the following research questions:

- What pathways do women take to ascend to the presidency?
- What leadership styles do women tend to practice?

A number of themes emerged from the semi-structured interviews. The interviews revealed three conceptual themes that were expressed through (a) leadership issues, (b) personal qualities and (c) work experiences and education.

Leadership Issues

From the conceptual themes of leadership issues emerged three thematic categories: leadership styles, male versus female leadership, and perceived institutional reactions to female presidents.

Leadership Styles

Leadership styles as noted in Chapter 2 give rise to many theories of leadership (Bennis, 1989, Gardner, 1995). The presidents’ responses indicate they would probably be practitioners of “process.” The process theories explain the
processes through which relationships develop between leaders and subordinates. For instance, Alpha describes her leadership style as “participatory.” Alpha thinks it is important to involve all levels of the organizational structure to make the institution “run smoothly.” She formulated a “planning council” to gather input from everybody on campus as to the needs of the institution. These needs could be “equipment needs, personnel needs and other supply needs.” “We will all be involved in this,” states Alpha.

Beta also describes her style as participatory. She thinks that everyone should have a voice and the ultimate decision would rest with the president, adding, “I believe in getting input.” Beta recalls an earlier observation of the lack of input when she started her tenure as president. The institution had a situation wherein the standing committees did not consult with the administration and felt they controlled the day-to-day operation of the school. She remarks, “I went in and they were anti-presidential,” because the “standing committees” ran the institution rather than the president. Beta created an executive management council that included representation from the director level and higher. This gave everybody an opportunity for input into perceived policies and other activities mundane to the institution. It also established
time for the standing committees to meet once a month.
According to Beta, every individual on campus serves on at least one standing committee—from the janitors on up. Everybody has a role to play.

Chi simply identifies her style as “working together.” Implicit in her response is the concept of participatory leadership. Chi had the luxury of being in the infrastructure of the institution long before she became president, stating “trustworthiness, working together and carrying out the plans of the institution are important ingredients” with respect to formulating one’s leadership style. Chi also thinks that if “you got the job, you do the job.” This attitude could foreseeably undermine participatory leadership. In other words, sometimes getting the job done is more important than the consideration of others’ input. Nonetheless, Chi expects that everyone should do his or her job while receiving input along the way.

**Reaction to Female Leadership**

The fact that the presidents in this study were the first females to hold this position at their respective institutions created the impression in the minds of some [according to the perception of the presidents] that the leadership would suffer with respect to the day-to-day operation of their campuses. Alpha did give thought to how she would be accepted by her
male peers but that thought subsided when one of her male peers jokingly called her “one of the boys.” Alpha’s acceptance could have been due to the fact that she bonded well with boys during her childhood, remarking, “I was such a tomboy... I mean there were no little girls in the neighborhood where I lived and I just grew up with the guys.” Alpha did not date in high school, but instead played basketball and stated that she considered herself as “one of the guys.”

Beta thinks that some factions refuse to give women the respect that they deserve and refuse to do so, no matter what. Despite being labeled as an “excellent leader” and one with “excellent qualities,” Beta says an anonymous letter to her pointed out that these attributes were fine, but, for someplace else and not on her campus. She states, “It is very difficult... People do not like it if you carry yourself in a professional way.” Beta thinks it is odd that her subordinates appear not to be concerned about being professional role models for the students. For example, Beta considers her dress while at work to be professional. For my “professional look, I have been criticized,” Beta states, adding, “I use my professional dress to serve as an example... not only for the students...” but for others who would see her as a role model. Gupton and Slick (1996) would support Beta’s notion as they believe that women must recognize who they are while accepting
that they are leaders and role models. Beta states that “trivial things” are the focus of some of her subordinates and also to some of the board members to whom she reports. For instance, the way she dresses for the workplace seemed to be more of focus than other pressing issues. Substantive issues had not been a major concern for her subordinates. Likewise, when her institution was re-accredited “with flying colors” and a larger urban community college with greater funding was placed on probation, Beta notes that there were no accolades for her community college from the upper-level administration or the media.

Alpha states that she did not give much thought to being a woman hired as the president. However, she thinks it was interesting that the local newspaper reported that a female was hired for the position and not simply that a new president was hired. Alpha also suggested that she was not respected early on in her presidency. For example, during a particular board meeting, she confronted a potentially volatile situation head-on that she used to serve as a lesson. Rather than exposing a board member for an improper and ill-advised action, she chose to deal with the situation directly by giving the board member the options of (1) being exposed for harassment and to never act in that way again, or (2) “ripping off his arm.” Her reaction to the board member’s action
possibly saved her from repercussions had she made a complaint. Alpha says that if a complaint had been lodged, it probably would have “backfired” on her. Instead, her reaction to the situation inspired respect.

Because of Chi’s lengthy tenure at her institution in other capacities, the reaction of the institution to her leadership was almost seamless. Chi states, “I know the people, I know the system, and I know the community.” She has not perceived any negative reactions to being the new leader on campus.

**Male versus Female Leadership**

As one might expect in a study dealing with female leadership, comparisons between male and female styles of leadership should not be overlooked. Chi discussed this issue in brief but convincing terms. Chi thinks there are no differences between male and female leadership. However, she does qualify that statement with “until you establish yourself, you might be looked at differently.” Chi believes that one difference may be that “women... sometimes show a little bit more of their human side.” Beta also had similar comments. Beta thinks that women are “more sensitive” to the needs of people and more “student-centered” than their male counterparts.
“A leader is a leader, and it takes certain characteristics and qualifications,” Alpha states. Alpha adds she does not have time to view leadership from a male/female perspective. She also suggests that other females “…should not use that…” male versus female perspective to cloud or shape how to go about running a college. Alpha has observed that male leaders facing the same predicaments she has encountered at her institution handled situations in similar fashions. She also draws “from the perception of [my] staff that as a female… would I be strong enough to carry out what needs to be carried out?” Once Alpha took on some difficult issues and handled them in a manner the institution had never witnessed before, word filtered to her that she really did “have balls.” So in her view, the issue of male versus female leadership means, “it is a matter of respect… you earn respect.”

In a contrasting view, Beta thinks that women do not get the same respect men get in the presidential position. Beta believes that leadership is leadership whether a male or a female is administering it. However, Beta feels that a female would be criticized for being “laid back. We [females] have to be assertive without being aggressive… and no matter how far we’ve come today, we still cannot behave as men.” In other words, Beta feels she cannot appear to be “aloof” or
“laid back” and at the same time realize the goals of the institution.

**Personal Qualities**

Female community college presidents are contributing a fresh perspective of leadership within their institutions and society as a whole (Getskow, 1996). In this study, information about the personal qualities of the female presidents who provide leadership at community colleges in North Carolina can contribute to the literature regarding female leadership in higher education. The thematic categories that emerge from the conceptual theme of personal qualities of the female presidents in this study include: family and spirituality, community involvement, and a sense of humor.

**Family and Spirituality**

The three presidents in this study all concluded that it was the influence of their family and the personal relationship with certain family members that provided the catalyst for them to ascend to their present position. These ascents started with strong suggestions from their parents. Alpha states that, “Mom and Dad had it set in their minds that I was going to college.” Alpha is a first generation college student. The fact that her family, who were considered to be low income, pulled together to make certain that she could go to college had an “...everlasting effect...” on her. Alpha
maintains that she had people who believed in her “through high school and elementary school.” Alpha had family who constantly told her that she could do anything she wanted to do. Interestingly, neither of her brothers “…went on to college.”

Family played a key part in Alpha’s decision to take the job of president. The possibility of creating chaos as a result of uprooting her family “was hard.” Alpha contends, “Here I had a family… married, my oldest child was getting ready to start high school, and I knew it would rip her apart.” However, Alpha states, “When it's time to make a move… you know its time to make a move.”

Beta grew up on a tobacco farm in the rural South but she had a “father who was pro-education.” He encouraged her to get as much education as possible. Beta’s mother simply wanted all of her girls to learn how to read and write. Beta also states that she had a lot of encouragement from other family members and could not say enough for her husband and son. Beta credits the sacrifices her husband and son made to get her to the point she is today; she adds that their support continues to be a “…testimony… My marriage was… a long distance one for many years,” Beta stated.

Chi immediately identified her mother, father and grandmother as the people who are responsible for her success,
mentioning, “They always taught me to do my best, to excel, and if you do that, the door is open.” For Chi, that encouragement and influence have been the key to her ascent to her present position.

The three presidents gave credit to their spirituality and a higher being for their success as well. Each president stated that they count their blessings everyday. “I am grateful to God everyday... that I don’t go down the paths that some people have gone down...” Alpha states. She adds, “I think you have got to have faith in God... If you don’t turn that stuff over and say God, take it back,” difficult situations “will eat you up.” Beta says she relies on “my church family” to pull her through difficult times. At least two of the presidents credit God with being the stabilizing force that makes them confident leaders. Beta believes that prayer can help when one is dealing with a difficult decision or situation.

**Community Involvement**

Education is under a great deal of challenge and it is vital that leaders be active in their local civic organizations to help others understand the current needs of education (Gupton & Slick, 1996). Each president in this study stressed the importance of being involved in the community that they served. Community involvement for them personally
ranged from church membership to community theater production volunteer. All of the presidents in this study served in some capacity on advisory boards, rotary clubs, chamber of commerce boards, etc. They also participate in a number of community projects such as Walk for Cancer. Alpha suggested that when one is in a leadership role, it is important to let your constituents know that “you are out there.” Alpha states, “you would be surprised... about what you hear about your college...” while out in the community. Apparently, Alpha began a relationship with the community that put her in tune with the needs of the community. That relationship also provided an instantaneous source of feedback, which allows her the “luxury” of formulating a strategy to deal with negative and positive comments from her community. Alpha states when one is out in the community “...you can hear the praises or you can defend the college.”

Beta acknowledges that community involvement is essential to providing “effective leadership” if one is in a leadership role. However, she describes her participation in the community as “cautious.” Beta had not built a level of confidence and rapport with certain stakeholders in the community. Beta terms her relationship with the community as “creating and building trust.” In the literature, these relationships developed by the presidents are called
interstitial (Nix, 1983). It is believed that in interstitial relationships, the presidents can gain (or lose) potential community power by the nature and extent of their involvement with their community.

Chi states simply, “I have the support of the community.” This statement seems quite logical given both Chi’s lengthy affiliation with her institution and length of residence in the area (i.e., 30+ years).

**Sense of Humor**

The Book of Proverbs shares this wisdom, “A merry heart doeth good like a medicine: but a broken spirit drieth the bones” (17:22)

According to a newsletter published by Omnia News & View (2001), humor relieves stress and burnout and can add years to employees’ lives. In the same article, it is suggested that humor can increase the amount of honest feedback in the workplace. According to Mulkay (1988), humor is the perfect medium in which to couch a serious message because any serious intention and any serious meaning can always be denied. Each president acknowledges that having a sense of humor helps with the day-to-day stress of being the president. Two of the presidents provided information-bearing quotes. Beta says that having a sense of humor helps her to be “grounded.” Beta has actually contemplated writing a book about things she
considered humorous during her tenure. “If you don’t have a
sense of humor... it can be pretty tedious,” Alpha states.

**Work Experiences and Education**

The pathways the three females in this study traveled to
ascend to the presidency reveal differing journeys. Two did
not start their professional journey with the intent of being
a president. For instance, Alpha started her career in a
private hospital that treated alcohol and drug addition. In
this setting, her position was equivalent to a caseworker for
drug addicts (her working title was administrative assistant
to the executive director). This experience taught her a lot
about people. “You can’t judge them [people] because you
haven’t been in their shoes” is one assessment she makes with
regard to her first career experience.

In the same setting, she met people from all “...walks of
life...” who, for whatever reason had problems that needed to be
resolved. The experience at the hospital proved to be valuable
to Alpha in terms of dealing with complex issues as a leader.
“Unfortunately” in this environment, she observed that forty
percent of the people she served died, “either traumatically
from a car accident or a fall, but all directly related to
alcohol.” Alpha decided that seven years of employment there
was enough because it became “...too difficult...” to bear.
She then moved away from that setting and began work with an attorney as an aide. She describes this experience as being the “worst year” of her life. The positive aspect of working with the attorney was that it prepared her for some of the courses pertaining to law during her doctoral studies. The experience with the attorney also prepared her to deal with county government. During her leadership as president, she has borrowed from that experience - “I mean in this kind of a job, it is... important to know how county government works; the attorney experience helped.”

After an “unbearable” year working with an attorney, Alpha decided she had “enough,” because of “personality conflicts.” The transition from that experience with the attorney led her to seek other opportunities. That search led her to the community college system.

Alpha began her community college career as an administrative assistant. This setting proved to be the pivotal point in her career. In this setting, she was divorced from her first husband and “forced” to become independent. Becoming a divorcée had its redeeming values; “what I learned from that [divorce] is you need to be prepared in life... and not so dependent on another person” Alpha states. Further, Alpha says that she developed a “Scarlet O’Hara attitude” and that she would not be that dependent on anyone again. This
“forced” her to return to school [while continuing work] and work on her master’s degree in adult education. It was while she was pursuing her master’s degree that it “dawned” on her that the importance of mentors and networking is crucial to enhancing one’s career in education and an important aspect of developing one for leadership. It was while she was pursuing her master’s and doctorate that she became knowledgeable about the “movers and shakers” of higher education. Not only did she become knowledgeable about the “powerbrokers” of higher education in North Carolina but outside of the state of North Carolina as well. Alpha acknowledges that even though she had a “loose affiliation” with people who are influential in higher education, this did not guarantee anything. Alpha made it clear that one cannot expect to “just do your job and hope somebody promotes you.” She stated that one has to be willing to take on more responsibilities… “extra things.” Then, she states, “it becomes easier to start thinking about promotions.”

Alpha immediately started with her doctoral studies upon completing her master’s degree. She also continued to grow in her job at the community college. Once changes were made in the administration, she became the Dean of Instruction and Student Services, to the chagrin of others who “…thought they should have been…” considered for the position. The president
of the college decided that Alpha was more suitable for the position because, as he stated, “I know how good you are.” Her colleagues who thought they should have been considered did not give Alpha such accolades. It was from this experience that Alpha states that she learned “you can’t win everybody over.”

She became successful in the capacity of Dean of Instruction and Student Services by involving the faculty “one-on-one,” introducing new ideas, and just being “gung ho.” Eventually, the president of the college retired. Alpha stated that she would have loved to replace the president but she knew the board of trustees wanted “new blood” and many people at the administrative level viewed her as the president’s “clone.” Therefore, after about fifteen years of service, Alpha decided that it was time for “something different.” One of her mentors (who was the president of another community college), immediately became interested in her becoming the executive vice president at his institution. During this period “just as a lark” she applied for the presidency at yet another institution. She assumed that position had been filled because “three months” had elapsed and she thought that she had been “deep sixed.” Upon return from a Southern Association of Colleges and Schools (SACS) conference, she received a telephone call from the institution at which she now serves
informing her that they would like her to interview for the position of president. Therefore, she had the dilemma of refusing an offer to become the executive vice president at her mentor’s institution versus the possibility of running her own institution. She discussed this dilemma with her mentor and he said, “If you can be president, go for it.” He also told her: “I’ll help you.” His reaction strengthened her belief that mentors and networking are important.

Alpha’s describes her attitude prior to her initial interview in this fashion, “I’ve got some other offers.” With that attitude, Alpha stated that she had a “great time with the interview.” She describes her interview with the board of trustees as one of candor. Her research of the institution suggested that there were morale issues and other problems, “people were just unhappy… frightened, and just not happy here.” The board of trustees confirmed her suspicion of the institution by asking the question, “How would you do this?” Alpha states it was that question that became a challenge for her and would ultimately decide if she would be the next president at her college.

Both Beta and Chi’s work experiences have been in higher education (with the exception of one year at a public high school for Beta). Beta’s early work experiences began with positions at a four-year institution. Her first experience in
administration was at an institution located in the South. In her first administrative position in higher education, Beta served as a research scientist and specialist. In this position she was responsible for planning, implementing and evaluating an extension program. During her tenure in that position, she received an offer from another school also located in the South to become a department chair. Beta stated that both positions afforded her the opportunity to work with “two-year institutions.” As a result of having the experience of working “collaboratively” with two-year institutions in a four-year college setting, Beta states the transition to the community college was “made easier.” Beta added, “I did not see... any problems in dealing with...” the community college coming from a four-year college setting.

Chi’s work experiences have all been with the same institution. She describes her ascension to the presidency as one of “impeccable” timing. In the late sixties, “I think... a new community college was opening its door every week.” Having no preconceived notion of what the community college mission entailed made her a likely person to hire. Chi states, “I think that’s why they hired me... I had no experience and no preconceptions.” Chi contends that her career moves within the community college were “orchestrated” by her mentors (four different presidents and others). From the moment she was
appointed to her first administrative position as registrar, Chi’s ascension to the presidency seemed to be predestined by the leadership in place. Chi states that she worked for four different presidents and each one recognized her for her “work ethics” and the previous president who “died unexpectedly, took me under his wing.” Chi says that if someone had asked her if she wanted to be president just three years prior to her appointment, she probably would have been “uncertain” about her response. Chi believes she felt “prepared” for the position of community college president because she felt she knew the institution from a variety of perspectives. These varying perspectives ranged from: (1) students (as a former teacher and as director for student services, registrar and financial aid), (2) teachers and staff (as vice-president of administration) to (3) the community (as executive vice-president).

**Effects of Public Policies**

Public policies such as affirmative action, Title VII and Title IX designed to “to level the playing field” had some effects on the participants in their ascent to the presidency. For instance, Alpha perceives that public policies had no bearing on her ascension to the presidency or her appointment. However, she does point out the college adhered to the affirmative action policies in regard to advertising for the
position she now holds. Alpha suggests that the applicant pool was probably influenced by public policy in that males and females and minorities were recruited. She states, "matter of fact... two of the finalists for the presidency were female." Alpha adds the Board of Trustees ultimately decided they were looking for the "best fit" for the presidency and "were not particularly influenced" by public policies designed to solicit women and minorities to apply for such a position. Alpha’s sentiment is reinforced by an article by Barwick (2002). Barwick suggests that boards are looking for a special person to fill a gap that they have defined for their unique institution.

Contrary to Alpha, Beta perceives that public policies such as Title IX and Title VII (affirmative action) may have been responsible for her ascension and appointment to the presidency. Beta states the "push" by the North Carolina Community College System’s president to hire more women and minorities may have had an influence with the Board of Trustees at her college. In other words, "the system’s goal" became the "local autonomy’s" goal in that they sought to hire a woman.

Chi states she "proved herself as a person" and did not think public policies had any affect on her ascent to the presidency. Chi attributes her ascent to the presidency to her
longevity with the institution. However, Chi believes that had she sought the presidency at another institution or outside of the state, public policies could have been an influence and "may have made the difference." In other words, she would have been listed as a "female applying for president."

**Thematic Synthesis: Pathways to the Presidency**

The participants in this study describe several pathways to the presidency. Each participant suggests that timing, networking and promotions can be instrumental in ascending to the position of a community college president. However, there are several themes that emerge from the participants as they describe their ascent to the presidency. Those themes are collapsed into three conceptual themes: leadership issues, personal qualities and work experiences/education. The interlinking of these themes help formulate distinct paths taken by each president.

Alpha suggests that one does not necessarily have to start his or her career in the education arena to become a community college president. For instance, Alpha’s pathway to the presidency included career stints outside of the higher education arena. Alpha worked in a hospital setting and a private attorney’s office before she embarked on a career in higher education. Alpha’s first position in higher education was as an administrative assistant (which she referred to as a
“secretarial type” position). Alpha experienced five distinct career changes before she became a community college president. Those career changes did not take her outside of the state.

Unlike Alpha, Beta and Chi’s pathways to the presidency would seem to fit a pattern that would ultimately groom one for a presidency. For instance, Chi appeared to be in the “right place at the right time.” Though she has been president for less than five years, Chi has been employed by the institution she presently serves for more than thirty years. Chi started as a part-time teacher and ascended to president by virtually working her way up from that point. Chi’s pathway to the presidency included six distinct career changes in a thirty-four year span. After becoming a part-time teacher, Chi’s promotions ranged from full-time teacher to executive vice-president for the community college.

Beta’s pathway to the presidency is similar to Chi’s in that they both had similar responsibilities by job titles and job descriptions. Beta’s experiences started briefly in a high school setting. She later accepted a position as an assistant professor at a four-year college and eventually became an assistant to the president for a four-year college in the Midwest United States prior to her appointment as a community college president. Unlike Chi and Alpha, Beta moved about the
country to seek advancement in higher education. Beta experienced six distinct career changes before she became a community college president (see Table 1).

The perceptions of Alpha and Chi reveal they did not believe that public policies had any influence on their ascent to the presidency and thought it was more of a “timing” element. However, they both do acknowledge that public policies are utilized to encourage all groups to apply for positions such as president of a community college.
Table 1.

ASCENSION TO THE PRESIDENCY

The major positions held prior to their appointment as president:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>President Alpha</th>
<th>President Beta</th>
<th>President Chi</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Caseworker for drug rehabilitation center (assistant to director)</td>
<td>Department head at a high school</td>
<td>Teacher at a community college</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Assistant to an attorney</td>
<td>Assistant professor at a four-year college</td>
<td>Director of counseling at a community college</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Administrative assistant at a community college</td>
<td>Research scientist and specialist at a four-year college</td>
<td>Financial aid officer at a community college</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Administrative assistant to president at a community college</td>
<td>Department chair of human ecology at a four-year college</td>
<td>Registrar at a community college</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dean, instruction and student services at a community college</td>
<td>Dean, college of agriculture and applied science at a four-year college</td>
<td>Director for student services at a community college</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>President of a community college</td>
<td>Assistant to president for planning and assessment at a four-year college</td>
<td>Vice president for administration at a community college</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Executive vice president at a community college</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>President at a community college</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Chapter 5

Discussion

This study used thematic analysis to gain a better understanding of the experiences of three women who have ascended to the presidency of institutions within the North Carolina Community College System. This study addresses the following research questions:

1. What pathways do women take to ascend to the presidency?
2. What leadership styles do women employ?

Using open-ended, semi-structured interviews, three participants were asked to describe their experiences that shaped their development and led them to the role of president of a community college. The interviews were parsed into information-rich quotations that were ultimately placed into six thematic categories. In addition, three narrative case studies were developed that appeared to represent one unique path to the community college presidency. As noted in Chapter 2, Aburdene and Naisbitt’s (1992) three of the six central patterns that characterize women’s leadership were highlighted in the females in this study. For instance, the presidents presented in this study believed their subordinates should have input as to how the institution operates on a day-to-day basis. This input would imply the presidents encouraged behavior that empowers.
The characteristic of providing role models was specifically mentioned by Beta. Beta suggested that she dresses in a fashion that could be construed as being a role model. Alpha suggested you have to serve as a role model in the community and behave in such a manner that would promote “rapport and trust.”

Beta and Chi had experiences early on in their careers that mandated they teach. For instance, Chi started as a part-time teacher and taught several courses during her tenure at her institution. Likewise, Beta’s credentials and experiences revealed she had strong ties to teaching. Beta and Chi believe their backgrounds in teaching have been helpful as they administer the affairs of their institutions.

Gillett-Karam (1994) suggests that leadership by women in the community college could be framed in four ways which are: caring and respectful of individual differences, acting collaboratively, taking appropriate risk to bring about change and their needs and capacity to win and hold trust. These observations are relevant to the females in this study. Each president thought it was important to provide an environment that was caring and respectful of individual differences. Alpha specifically states that long after she is gone, she wants to be remembered as one who cared about people and respected them. Beta personally believes that the workplace
should be one that respects individual differences. “You have to be sensitive to the needs of the people internally and externally,” Beta states. However, Beta suggests that celebrating individual differences at her institution is a work in progress. She gave this example: An executive council was created to give everybody, including custodians/janitors to mid-level to upper-level management, an opportunity to have some type of input into policies.

Another observation is that these women believed acting collaboratively is necessary if an institution is to survive. Each president admitted they do not make decisions in isolation. Each president collaborates with staff, the community and other community colleges. Prior to her appointment as president, one of Beta’s career stints included leading collaborative efforts with other two-year community colleges and governmental agencies.

The resumes of the presidents revealed they had attended at least two leadership initiative institutes. This is relevant because their attendance directly addresses a recommendation found in the report to the president of the North Carolina Community College System (1991). The report recommended the system should develop schemes that encourage diversity in the senior level administrators’ rank. One such program was designed to encourage women and minorities to seek
opportunities in senior level administrative position in the North Carolina Community College Leadership Program. Its specific purpose is to develop future community college leaders in North Carolina. It is designed for persons who seek opportunities for leadership within their own institutions. According to Gorham (2000), a training program such as the North Carolina Community College Leadership Program (NCCCLP) could have an indirect impact on one’s career in the following manner: (1) it could develop an awareness of leadership theory and (2) it could serve as a catalyst that could lead to self-improvement and greater involvement in college affairs and organizations. Contrarily, Gorham’s study suggested that such training could be a waste of time for someone who has had years of experience in middle to upper level administration.

Two of the three presidents state they see few differences between male and female leadership. They do acknowledge subtle differences that could best be described as the greater empathy women leaders express for their constituents. However, one president states female leadership is less respected, frequently challenged, and requires a “balancing act.” For example, female leaders have to “walk the line” between being too “aggressive” to being “too hands off.” According to one president, male leaders can operate on both sides of that continuum.
The presidents in this study proclaimed a participatory style of leadership, which is reflective of the literature of female leadership. The literature suggests that most women leaders tend to practice a participatory and nurturing style of leadership (Helgeson, 1990).

The presidents in this study also exhibited several attributes that, according to Gardner (1990), formulate a leader. For example, each president exhibited an understanding of their followers and their needs. Because of her long tenure with the college and the community, one president feels she has an advantage of being able to identify the needs of her followers.

Another attribute of a leader is expressed in terms of the capacity to win and hold trust. One president suggests her leadership style promotes trust and working together and "following through." Conversely, one president suggests the "trust factor" is not there in her environment (she identified this as one of her challenges). "You have got to trust your lieutenants," she states.

The attribute of ascendance has been realized by each president in this study. Although two of three presidents did not aspire to become a community college president, their work experiences, life experiences and education enabled them to take advantage of the opportunity and nonetheless ascend to
the presidency. The ascension to the presidency was a deliberate plan for one of the presidents. She decided after serving as a dean early in her career, she would like to become a college president.

Professional development opportunities are believed to contribute to career advancement (McDade, 1997). None of the presidents reported experiencing any personal or institutional barriers to her professional development that would ultimately lead to her presidency. Brown (2000), in her study of female presidents stated that her subjects reported the following benefits of professional development: (1) enhanced desire to pursue the presidency; (2) the experience enhance their self-esteem; (3) provided networking opportunities; and (4) enhanced their professional development.

Each president possessed personal qualities that sustained them in their day-to-day function as president as well as during times of challenge. Specifically, these female leaders described possessing a family support system that nurtured them in their early development and throughout their lives as the chief reason for their success.

Aside from family support, each president admitted having at least one mentor who encouraged them to pursue senior level positions in higher education and other fields (including the presidency). One president had multiple mentors. It should be
noted that two presidents in this study had only males for mentors. However, Alpha had female and male mentors. Mentor relationships for women professionals offer assistance, contacts, and critique of activities (Holt, 1981).

Each president saw the value of being actively involved in the community. Two of the presidents saw community involvement as offering them enhanced visibility within the community. As such, they saw themselves as being the front person for their institution. Two of the presidents saw value in the feedback they received from the community and as agents of change, felt they were able to mold and shape community perception about their colleges. Likewise, all of the presidents suggested they have a commitment to forge "trust building" in their respective communities.

Limitations of the Present Study

It is important to recognize the information collected in the present study reflects the participants’ perceptions of their own ascent to the community college presidency. These perceptions may or may not reflect the factors that were, in reality, responsible for their ascent. For instance, Alpha viewed her divorce as a pivotal point in her life. This reality may or may not have put her on course to become a college president. The participants’ responses to the interview questions reflect their perception at that
particular time. In other words, if asked to respond to the same interview questions at a later time, the participants might respond differently.

The scope of this study is limited to three female presidents of North Carolina community colleges.

**Summary and Suggestions for Future Research**

The purpose of this study addressed two overarching research questions:

1. What pathways do women take to ascend to the presidency?
2. What leadership style do women tend to employ?

In completing this descriptive study, the participants gave their perspectives and perceptions on their ascent to the position of a community college president.

The career pathways these participants chose appeared to be entrenched in personal choices they made early on in their career. The participants in this study had at least twenty years of experience in higher education. They each experienced at least four distinct career changes within the field of higher education prior to their appointment as president. Only one president had career experiences that included other fields than higher education.

With respect to what leadership style women tend to practice in their role as president, each of the participants identified a participatory style. The participants’ style of
leadership adds to the argument regarding how women manage. Billard (1992) argue that women are more likely to manage in an interactive style, encouraging participation, sharing power and information and enhancing the self worth of others. The literature also suggests that boards are looking for a collaborative leadership style and they believe that presidents who communicate with faculty and staff and involve them in decision making will create a happy organization (Barwick, 2002).

The participants in this study stressed that community involvement is a key factor for success in their position. As observed by Weisman and Vaughan (2001), a significant number of community college presidents function on community-based boards, corporate boards and perform community services. Barwick (2002) suggested that any aspiring applicant for president would be advised to become active in the community.

Finally, two of the participants implied that public policies had little to do with neither their ascent nor appointment to the community college presidency. The remaining participant believed public policies were ultimately contributory for her appointment to the presidency. Each of the participants believed public policies were adhered to with respect to recruitment and advertisement for the position of president.
More research is needed to gain insight and understanding of the benefits female college presidents contribute to higher education. Furthermore, a longitudinal study may address the degree to which public policies have affected the hiring of women to the position of president. Additional studies addressing the effectiveness of female leadership styles in higher education could also expand the description of leadership in higher education.
REFERENCES


http://www.acenet.edu/programs/policy/president-study


Un iversity Microfilm International.


http://www.nationalforum.com/12growe.htm


Jones, D. (January, 2003). Few women hold top executive jobs, even when CEOs are female. *USA TODAY, Money Section, pg. 1b.*


Ramsay, E. (October 30, 2000). Women and Leadership in Higher Education: Facing International Challenges and
Maximising Opportunities. Keynote address delivered at the international seminar Asian Women Leaders in Higher Education II: leadership competencies to face the local-global challenges of the 21st century, Universiti Kebangsaan Malaysia, Kuala Lumpur.


Appendix I

IRB

North Carolina State University
Institutional Review Board for the Use of Human Subjects in Research
SUBMISSION FOR NEW STUDIES

Title of Project: Ascension to the Presidency: A Descriptive Study of Female Presidents in the North Carolina Community College System

Principal Investigator: Keith Smith
Department: Adult & Community College

Source of Funding (required information): If externally funded, include sponsor name and university account number
Campus Address (Box Number)

Email: kenco2752@ncat.com
Phone: 919-521-5880
Fax: N/A

RANK: [ ] Faculty [ ] Student: [ ] Undergraduate; [ ] Masters; or [ ] PhD
[ ] Other (specify): EDD

If rank is other than faculty, name of faculty sponsor overseeing the research:
Faculty Sponsor’s Email: wlee@ncsu.edu
Campus Box: 1132

As the principal investigator, my signature testifies that I have read and understood the University Policy and Procedures for the Use of Human Subjects in Research. I assure the Committee that all procedures performed under this project will be conducted exactly as outlined in the Proposal Narrative and that any modification to this protocol will be submitted to the Committee in the form of an amendment for its approval prior to implementation.

Principal Investigator:

Keith Smith
(Date)

As the faculty sponsor, my signature testifies that I have reviewed this application thoroughly and will oversee the research in its entirety. I hereby acknowledge my role as the principal investigator of record.

Faculty Sponsor:

Wynetta Lee
(Date)

PLEASE COMPLETE IN DUPLICATE AND DELIVER TO:
Institutional Review Board, Box 7514, NC State University, Raleigh, NC 27695-7514

For IRB office use only
IRB Committee: Reviewer
[ ] Approve [ ] Approve pending modifications [ ] Table
[ ] Disapprove

Reviewer Name: __________________________ Signature: __________________________ Date: ____________

Final IRB Committee Decision
[ ] Exempt Review [ ] Expedited Review [ ] Full Review [ ] Not Approved

Date: __________________________

Committee Chairperson __________________________ Date: __________________________

RECEIVED: __________________________ SENT TO REVIEWER: __________________________ LETTER TO PI: __________________________
Appendix II

Participation Letter

March 26, 2003

Dear Dr _____________:

I am a doctoral student at North Carolina State University. Based on demographic information I have gathered from the North Carolina Community System, you have been identified as a president of one of the colleges within that system. As president of a community college, your story is vital to the development of my research regarding leadership in higher education and the pathway taken to ascend to the presidency. This research is for partial fulfillment of my dissertation requirements. I have chosen to research the experiences of females who have reached the highest executive level in higher education. More specifically, I am interested in your career path and how would you describe your leadership tendencies.

I would like for you to participate in my research by agreeing to be interviewed in a one-hour session at your convenience sometime before April 30, 2003. During our interview, I will ask questions relevant to the experiences that prepared you for the presidency and questions relevant to leadership. Your interview will be tape recorded and held in the strictest confidence. Once your recording has been transcribed and coded, this information will be analyzed along with other participants. The recording will be destroyed after transcription. In this research, you will not be identified by name nor will your college be identified.

Sincerely,

Keith Smith – NCSU Doctoral Student
Appendix III

Consent Form

The purpose of this study is twofold: a) describe the leadership styles female presidents tend to practice and b) describe the pathways females choose to ascend to the position of president.

You will be asked to participate in an informal interview that will last approximately one hour and fifteen minutes. The interview will be tape recorded (audio) and later transcribed to capture your exact words. Your identity will be kept completely confidential through the use of a pseudonym. I will have sole access to the consent form, tapes, and transcription. The tape recording will be erased upon transcription and the transcribed notes will be locked in a fireproof safe at my office and destroyed after three years. There are no foreseeable risks involved in your participation in this research. Participation will provide you with the benefit of reflecting on your own experience and will provide me, as the researcher, the opportunity to understand and describe more completely your perspectives as they developed during your ascent to the presidency.

Your participation is voluntary and you may refuse to participate, refuse to answer any specific question, or withdraw at any time without penalty. You may contact me at any time if you have further questions about your rights as a participant by contacting the Institutional Review Board at North Carolina State University located in Raleigh, North Carolina at 919 515-4514.

Principal Investigator (Researcher): Keith Smith
203 Gipson Drive
Garner, NC 27529
Home phone: 919-821-5860
Cell Phone: 919-612-5206
Email: ksmc27529@aol.com

I fully understand the explanation of the study and I agree to participate.

Name______________________________ Title _________________

Signature ________________________ Date_________________________
Appendix IV

Interview Protocol

Project: Ascension to the Presidency: A Descriptive Study of Female Presidents in the North Carolina Community College System

Time of Interview: __________

Date: __________

Place: _______________________

Interviewer: __________________________

Interviewee: __________________________

Description of the study: A description of the career pathways women choose to ascend to the highest executive level in higher education and the leadership style they tend to practice.

Questions:

• What do you feel are some of your strong qualities as leader of this institution?

• Respond to the statement: Describe for me the people, events and opportunities that were important contributors over a lifetime that enabled you to be appointed to your position as president.

• What do you feel are some important qualities for women leaders in higher education?

• What do you feel is your one strong personal quality that has helped you in your position as president?
Appendix IV continued

• Respond to the statement: Describe some of the difficulties you have experienced as president.

• How do you feel that women become identified with being in charge, without being identified with negative or unfeminine ways?

• Do you feel the issues surrounding authority are the same for male presidents and female president in two-year community colleges?
Appendix V
Quotes utilized to formulate thematic categories

ON FAMILY:
FAMILY...I think the beginning of mine was a family, a mother and father and a grandmother - very influential to me - who always taught me to do best to excel...
FAMILY...Mom and dad had it set in their minds that I was going to college, and I knew early on...
FAMILY...Neither of my brothers went on to college...
FAMILY...From the standpoint of people I’m going to go back to my childhood and family influences
FAMILY...My father was very pro-education...
FAMILY...My husband was always encouraging me...
FAMILY...He had always been there for me and encouraged me to go for it...
FAMILY...I taught at the college four nights a week and I would pick up my baby and get home and get a sitter in...I would be back teaching by seven at night...
FAMILY...I had a family... I was married and my husband... had never been anywhere else... my oldest child...I knew that it was going to rip her apart...but you know when its time to move...
FAMILY...so I took the job, came down here and lived by myself for three or four months...this is too hard... we will get the house sold somehow...
FAMILY...If I have any regrets, probably I regret that...it was tough for my family...

ON SPIRITUALITY:
SPIRITUALITY...I think you have got to have faith in God... if you don’t turn that stuff over and say, here God, I can’t handle it... I don’t want it back... Every time I take it back I hear God...
SPIRITUALITY...I have excellent support from my church family... and you must put your trust in a higher being...
SPIRITUALITY...I’m getting a lot of strength from God...
SPIRITUALITY...I have a lot of blessing in my life, and I need to be grateful everyday...

ON WORK EXPERIENCE/EDUCATION THEMES (WE/E)
WE/E...It was that we had come from such a long ways from being afraid of not even getting an education to the point where I had obtained a doctorate of philosophy degree...
WE/E...All of my experience, except for one year, my professional experience is in higher education...
WE/E...My experiences at four-year institutions afforded me opportunities to work very closely with two-year institutions...
WE/E...I went to school and planned to teach public school and got introduced to the community college system...
WE/E...the reason I was told I was hired is because I didn’t have any experience...
WE/E...I’ve had so many opportunities...
WE/E... I came in as a teacher – I taught political science and I worked in guidance studies...

WE/E... I was registrar for about five years...

WE/E... Then I was financial aid/job placement officer. I’ve been director of counseling, I directed student development, and I was executive vice president of administration – and then executive vice president and now president...

WE/E... I came in at the bottom and I was able to learn...

WE/E... I started my career in private hospital that treated alcohol and drug addiction and was what you would call then an administrative assistant to the executive director...

WE/E... My experiences taught me a great deal about people...

WE/E... I was hired as the administrative assistant to the president...

WE/E... Eventually, that job grew into – I was in charge of personnel marketing and foundation... that grew into more of an assistant to the president role...

WE/E... I finished my course work, and the dean of instruction student services came open...

WE/E... The networking was incredible, the people that helped me...

WE/E... I gained a couple of mentors along the way...

WE/E... Coming up through that process, there weren’t any female friends. It wasn’t until just a couple of years ago that you started having females to associate with...

WE/E... I’ve had male and female mentors...

WE/E... My experiences so far have been with males as mentors. He was a math major and he was a real inspiration. I like his style...

WE/E... I like his style and how he dealt with students and the whole thing...

WE/E... I went to Carnegie Mellon to their president institute...

WE/E... I attended several leadership institutes... such as the millennium 2000 institute...

WE/E... I served as a department chair researcher, a dean, assistant to the president...

WE/E... I think it is my accomplishments. I have been criticized because people say, how was she able to all of this... when I went there and I said I’ve had my doctorate for 20 years... that bothered people...

WE/E... I gained a great understanding of how law works and what has to be done. I know all about filing lawsuits and doing depositions...

WE/E... you need to be prepared in life so that your are not dependent on another person...

WE/E... my mentor... supported me when I went back for the master’s and the doctoral program...

WE/E... All my jobs have been here for 34 years... and that has served a great advantage in that I know people; I know the people, I know the system... I know the community...
ON PERSONAL QUALITY:

PERSONAL QUALITY...I’m strong-willed and determined...

PERSONAL QUALITY...being a female in a man’s dominated profession I think that they thought I was a pushover...they learned fast that I was about business...

PERSONAL QUALITY...when you’re president, you’re role model whether you want to be or not...

PERSONAL QUALITY...People don’t like if you carry yourself in a professional way...

PERSONAL QUALITY...I’m goal-oriented, determined and resourceful... I make things happen...

ON COMMUNITY:

COMMUNITY...I’m on the chamber board and the ABC board and other board...

COMMUNITY...I serve on several boards in the community and the region....

COMMUNITY...And I just met with so many people once I started to work here that were willing to just help me go along, and I think that’s been a thing with a lot of people in the community and community colleges...

COMMUNITY...I think it is important in your life to not only give - obviously to... your church..

ON REACTIONS TO FEMALE LEADERSHIP;

REACTION...once you establish yourself, I think until you establish yourself, you’re maybe looked at differently. But once people realize that there’s really no difference, I think the only difference maybe that as women, we sometimes maybe show a little bit more of our human side, just to start with...

REACTION...I don’t want to be treated differently from anybody else...

REACTION...once we show that we’re going to make a decision and stick to it, that it’s no different...

REACTION...I don’t think it is so much a male versus female thing anymore...I did back in ’90...

REACTION...yes, there were things that happened along the way that would not have happened unless you were a woman...

REACTION...I never did win over the three associated deans... I can understand why...

REACTION...there is a faction that just refuses to give women the respect we deserve.. they just refuse to do it no matter what...

REACTION...I guess she does have balls... It is good when you know somebody has battled and then won... That is what I mean.. If I could just tell everybody- you cannot take this stuff personally...

REACTION...I never did win over the three associated deans... I can understand why...

REACTION...I guess she does have balls... It is good when you know somebody has battled and then won... That is what I mean... If I could just tell everybody- you cannot take this stuff personally...

REACTION...When I was interviewed, they ask can you make tough decisions...I come here and try to do my job and I get criticized for doing it because I know what needs to be done...
REACTION...I’ll never forget going to tell my guidance counselor I was going to be a pharmacist. He said, “Oh no, you can’t do that, you’re a female…

REACTION...You can be a secretary, a teacher, a librarian or a nurse...and of course you can be a teacher... REACTION...Well, they are mostly men, because mostly at that point there were men in management positions... REACTION...A leader is a leader, it doesn’t matter if it’s a male or a female...

REACTION...there is a faction that just refuses to give women the respect we deserve... they just refuse to do it no matter what...

REACTION...I think you have got to be able to – for women – be patient and tolerate...

REACTION...I was worried when I became the president about what it was going to be like even though I had been going to meeting with Doctors... and I knew a lot of the guys...I was worried about how I would be accepted... REACTION...When I first got here, I had three males reporting ... I heard through the grapevine that they were wonder whether the new president had any balls...

REACTION...I don’t think women get the respect that men get...

ON LEADERSHIP STYLES (L/S):

L/S...His style again was very micromanaging, and I don’t do that... if I’m not hiring people that are capable of doing the job, then I’m going to do something different...

...I believe in involving everyone in the process...

L/S...be it male or female, if you treat people with dignity and respect, and you do the job you are supposed to be doing and you don’t put if off on somebody else, if you’ve done something wrong saying, it is somebody else’s fault accept responsibility for your actions...

L/S...I think to be a leader you had better never forget the ones that you pass by on your way... I think for a woman leader to know that, be it senior administrator to one of the custodians, without each and every one of them this place would not work...

L/S...I would call my style of leadership participatory...

L/S...I think we have to be sensitive to the needs of the people and I think that we are...

L/S...participatory...I believe in everyone have a voice and ultimately the decision is the president’s but I believe in getting input...

L/S...I encourage input from my people...

L/S...I think that we tend to be more student centered than men...

L/S...I involve everyone, from the custodians to the department chairs and VPs...

L/S...You need to treat people with respect and dignity...everybody - even the ones that you don’t like so much...

L/S...I think I have some pretty strong management skills; I have some pretty strong budget background and probably the biggest thing I think is my ability to get along with people...

L/S...The people see me as a real team player...

L/S...I think my integrity; I’m going to do what’s right or what I think is rights for the college...and if it’s popular or whatever happens, the college is my top priority...

L/S...I would call my leadership style participatory...Well pretty much one of trust and
working together, and someone to plan and carry through...

L/S...I really don’t look at it from a male/female perspective... I think that if I were to say to a female, don’t use that... don’t let that cloud or shape how you will go about doing things... A leader is a leader, and it takes certain characteristics and qualifications...

ON SENSE OF HUMOR:

HUMOR...You have to have a sense of humor to do this job...

HUMOR...I’m thinking about writing a book... I see a lot of humor. I see so much that I really need to write a book...

HUMOR...Some things you have to laugh about...

HUMOR...add in there a sense of humor. If you don’t have a sense of humor, it can be pretty tedious...

HUMOR...people will get to you... you have to see humor in it all... you have to have a balance...

NOT CATEGORIZED

...you have to like people, you have to be a good listener and a good communicator...

...I’m one who quickly become attached to people...

...but I think what I would like to be remembered is after I’m gone is the fact that I cared about people and respected them...I think you’ve got to have a passion for what you are doing...

...I try to tell women that - you know there are some things that are just totally unacceptable. If you have to take whatever action necessary, but the majority of it - you can pretty much figure out how to either joke it off or say... cut it out...

...sometimes you have enemies that you may not deserve, but you still have to deal with it...

...I think we have to be student-centered...

...I think my vision is that we will be the premier rural community college in the state...

...right now the board has not come out and said, enough already... we set the policy and the president runs the institution... take it or leave it...

...Yeah, we’ve been willing to help each other, it’s not been a closed society per se...

...And I have to say women have been very supportive. But I have had one female mentor; she was not connected with the college...she was a real leader... and she and I were very close...