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**Significant career and life experiences and subsequent lessons
learned for Michigan community college presidents: A
self-report interview procedure**

Dotterer, Lewis Leroy, Ph.D.

Michigan State University, 1989

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SIGNIFICANT CAREER AND LIFE EXPERIENCES AND SUBSEQUENT
LESSONS LEARNED FOR MICHIGAN COMMUNITY COLLEGE
PRESIDENTS: A SELF-REPORT INTERVIEW PROCEDURE

By

Lewis L. Dotterer

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1989

ABSTRACT

SIGNIFICANT CAREER AND LIFE EXPERIENCES AND SUBSEQUENT LESSONS LEARNED FOR MICHIGAN COMMUNITY COLLEGE PRESIDENTS: A SELF-REPORT INTERVIEW PROCEDURE

By

Lewis L. Dotterer

A topic of growing interest in the research literature involves the effect of training experiences on the future development of leaders within the realm of higher education. Studies have investigated formal academic programs and the notion of career paths followed by the chief academic officers of community colleges.

Few studies, however, have examined the effect of informal learning experiences on the growth and development of community college presidents. Little information has been collected to identify what lessons were learned from earlier professional and personal experiences that enabled the presidents to carry out their job responsibilities most effectively.

The purposes of this study were to (a) begin to identify the kinds of events and periods of transition that community college presidents experience that affect their professional development, (b) identify the major lessons learned from having experienced the significant life events, and (c) assess the importance of other

Lewis L. Dotterer

people (professional relationships, mentors, family members) in enhancing the professional development of the presidents studied.

The sample studied was drawn from the population of 29 Michigan community college presidents. Fourteen chief academic officers were selected for the study and invited to participate. Efforts were made to obtain insights from presidents representing different sized institutions, as well as accurately reflecting the opinions of all minority groups found within the population. The 12 presidents studied met the preestablished criteria through the use of confidential interviews.

Interview procedures revealed that personal (non-work-related) experiences contributed greatly to the professional development of community college presidents. Professional experiences occurring either before the current position or incurred as president also facilitated the development of the group members studied. Other people served as role models for all the presidents interviewed. Formal academic learning experiences, although deemed important and vital, were reported less frequently as enhancing a president's professional development than other personal and professional events identified. Specific lessons learned could be attributed by the participants to many events highlighted. Patterns of experiences and lessons learned were discerned, as were the "significant learnings" that all presidents relied on when challenged by life situations.

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1989

Dedicated to the living memory of
my sister, Marjorie Louise Dotterer,
who was so giving to others during her life;
and to
Egon George Eckel, my father-in-law,
who touched so many lives and helped all
who knew him.

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CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

Focus of the Study

Over the last 25 years, the field of higher education has undergone periods of both growth and contraction. During the time span of expansion, many new career opportunities have been made available within the community college system. People were groomed to take on job responsibilities of administrators and chief academic officers. Formal academic training programs were designed to respond to "the atmosphere of unlimited growth and possibility" (Chibucos & Green, 1989, p. 21) by offering fellowship programs, seminars, and other workshops to leaders within the higher education system.

More recently, the atmosphere within higher education has switched from one of growth to one of "financial hardship, changing student populations, and abundant applicant pools for administrative positions" (Chibucos & Green, 1989, p. 22). Because of the large number of applicants for fewer academic positions, it continues to be a perceived need within the ranks of the higher education community to offer training opportunities designed to "identify and prepare new leaders" (Chibucos & Green, 1989, p. 22).

These training opportunities provide necessary leadership development for experienced administrators as well as individuals

being prepared for future job responsibilities. Individuals who took part in training activities, like the ACE Fellows Program (The American Council on Education), "indicated that they learned a great deal about institutional administration" (Chibucos & Green, 1989, p. 24). The fellows also reported, however, that "although the specifics fade away, the program's overriding value is the opportunity to develop an integrated understanding of higher education" (p. 38).

Since the "specifics fade away," one wonders if another kind of learning opportunity would help "fill in the gaps." Are seminars, institutes, and past course work enough?

White (1957) suggested that most of an administrator's education comes as a result of being that administrator. "Most of this education will come from his day-to-day and week-by-week experience. Each decision made, each issue faced, each problem solved, even each mistake (and there will be plenty of them) will contribute to this education" (p. 10).

In deciding on a population to study, this investigator was impressed by the vast amount of literature in the field of organizational behavior (Cox, 1985; Deal & Kennedy, 1982; Hersey & Blanchard, 1982; Kanter, 1983; Naisbitt & Aburdene, 1985; Peters & Austin, 1985; Peters & Waterman, 1982; Wexley & Yukl, 1984) and especially that focusing on the role of the leader or chief administrator (Arman, 1986; Block, 1987; Bradford & Cohen, 1984; Cohen & March, 1974; Bennis & Nanus, 1985; Iaconetti & O'Hara, 1985; Kotter, 1982, 1988; Lahti, 1973; Lindsey, Homes, & McCall, 1987;

McCall, Lombardo, & Morrison, 1988; Vaughan, 1986). (A more thorough reflection and expansion of this literature is contained in Chapter II.)

One group of chief administrators who had not been researched to excess was the population of community college presidents. Parnell (cited in Vaughan, 1986) stated, "Far too little research has been conducted about the leaders of these uniquely American educational inventions [community colleges]" (p. vii).

According to Vaughan (1986), community college presidents experience many demands and pressures associated with the role of chief academic officer. To be successful, these leaders must be able to "produce results, select people to fill positions, resolve conflicts, communicate, motivate, and delegate" (p. 189). Effective leaders need to be able to relate to others as well as solve problems and encourage staff members to be independent and self-confident.

The aforementioned skills and abilities could have been learned during academic programs, workshops, or training institutes (Henderson, 1960). Formal academic training could account for some of the skill development, as could on-the-job training (Henderson, 1960). It is possible that these administrators learned specific skills either from previous years in the current position, while serving in a similar position in another organization, or in other positions along the career path that preceded the current presidency (Arman, 1986).

It has been stated, however, that not all people in the role of president have been trained to effectively take on the challenges that the position demands. Dressel (1981) declared, "Individuals are selected as administrators, rather than either trained or suited to it" (p. ix). Lahti (1973) remarked that community college presidents "come to their posts as amateurs, lacking management skills and the knowledge of application to management systems" (p. 34).

Much space in the literature has been given to explaining the skills necessary to be successful in the role of leader. Little research has been provided that has focused on the development of the necessary skills. Even fewer studies have pinpointed the professional development of community college presidents.

The focus of this project was on life experiences, both professional and personal, that were identified by the participants as contributing significantly to the career accomplishments of the community college president. It was believed that the experiences and subsequent lessons learned were a major contributing factor to the training and development of community college presidents.

Problem Statement

Most research has focused on effective administrators and the effect of formalized training programs on the continued success of these executives. Little research has been done with community college presidents and the effect of such informal training experiences as life transitions and events on the professional

growth of these administrators. Few data have been collected emphasizing the "lessons of experience" that were learned either before taking the current academic position or during the present tenure of the chief academic officers.

It is not known if life experiences affect the performance of community college presidents, nor have sufficient data been collected that detail the patterns of life events than enhance the development of the chief academic officer. Do certain types of experiences encourage and enhance growth opportunities in the presidents studied: (a) formal learning opportunities (i.e., classes, seminars, degree programs, institutes, and so on); or (b) informal learning experiences (i.e., specific job tasks, other people, failures, new projects)?

A need exists for defining the kinds of lessons learned from having experienced certain life events. If patterns exist, they should be explored and identified.

Purpose of the Study

The purpose of this study was to investigate the relationship between community college presidents in Michigan and the professional or personal experiences that they identified as having a significant effect on their performance as an administrator. This investigation was conducted to describe and analyze those events reported by the presidents and to classify the key events into patterns or themes if such patterns existed. The kinds of events identified were those that seemed to have had a lasting effect on

the president and that were perceived as being helpful in preparing the individual for the challenges faced on the job in the role of chief administrative officer in the community college.

In addition to the events discussed, the presidents were asked to identify specific lessons they had learned as a result of having experienced those challenging times. Such "lesson clusters" could be helpful in understanding the basic management/leadership philosophy of the community college presidents. The lessons learned as well as the self-reported significant lessons were also identified, analyzed, and classified according to similarities and patterns that existed.

Many experiences could affect the development of the community college administrator, some of which were formal learning opportunities (course work, seminars, institutes, and conferences) and others more informal in nature (specific experiences earlier in the career of the president). This study was designed to begin to identify, through self-report procedures, the kinds of events and the lessons learned from those events that helped prepare and educate the community college presidents.

Research Questions

1. What effect did work and life experiences have on the professional development of community college presidents?
2. What experiences had the greatest effect on the community college presidents: (a) formal training, (b) informal on-the-job training experiences, or (c) personal life experiences?

3. What lessons were learned from these professional experiences that better prepared the administrators for the job tasks associated with the role of community college president?

4. Did certain patterns or themes arise pertaining to the kinds of experiences or the lessons learned for the group of presidents sampled?

5. If patterns of experiences or lessons learned arose, what effect could these data have for the professional development of prospective leaders in the community college environment?

The focus of this study was on gaining a better understanding of how current community college presidents develop professionally on the job. It was important to identify past learning opportunities and the specific lessons learned that continued to affect the president on a day-to-day basis. Were there specific pre-president positions that prepared the president to take on the responsibilities of the office of chief academic officer? If many presidents were deans, for example, before becoming president, what tasks within the dean position helped prepare the individual for the duties of the presidency? Were formal educational experiences perceived as major developmental tasks? How important were mentors to the president?

Importance of the Study

This study was designed and carried out to fill a void within two major fields of research (community college presidents and leadership development). The investigation was undertaken to

"bridge the literature" that already existed in the area of management with data collected that has focused on presidential career paths and professional preparation. It was hoped that the research findings would facilitate the acquisition of the following:

1. Answering the research questions will add to our understanding of the individual who serves in the role of community college president.

2. New questions about the community college president will be defined as a result of completing this study.

3. Individuals serving as president could use the interview process as a means of enhancing their own introspective abilities. It could be beneficial to periodically assess their development and to strategize new professional goals for themselves.

4. Current presidents might be able to identify leadership strengths and areas they could focus on for future growth.

5. Community college presidents could also use the results of this study as a source of tasks or experiences that could be turned into training endeavors for subordinates who are being groomed for leadership positions. For example, if a president realizes the importance of a mentor, that president could establish him/herself as a mentor for another staff member within the organization.

6. The results of this study could be used as a means of enhancing the organizational awareness for individuals on staff who have leadership potential. Once identified, the individuals could undergo the grooming process.

7. Past presidents could use the interview process as a means for reflection as they identify their contributions to the community college(s) they served. (Have I mentored others? How did I help other staff members grow and develop?)

8. Future aspiring leaders could use the results of the study as a means to set career experience goals with the intention of being better prepared for becoming the chief academic officer. These people would have a better idea of what they would need to learn, as well as identifying current strengths they possess. As Kauffman (1980) said, "There is no preparation for the job or full recognition of its hazards" (p. ix).

9. Individuals interested in career development, especially management development, will find the results of this study interesting and useful as they work with other populations of leaders.

Because this study was designed to begin to identify information about a specific population, some data were undoubtedly left uncovered and others given only cursory explanation. The research, therefore, had some specific limitations, which are addressed in the following section.

Limitations and Delimitation of the Study

Because this study involved an interview process of self-reported data and perceptions of community college presidents, several limitations existed. The limitations are discussed to

define more clearly the parameters and boundaries of the research project. The study limitations are as follows:

1. The study reflected the impressions and perceptions of community college presidents who chose to participate. Nonparticipants' perceptions may have differed from those of the study respondents.

2. Because of the small sample size, generalization of the findings was affected. The researcher chose depth of understanding and richness of response over breadth of the sample.

3. The interview questions were designed to gather appropriate data for the study. However, some bias was inevitable (selective perceptions/memory of participants and choice of emphasis in reporting results from the investigation), and data interpretations were subject to the limitations associated with the use of such data-gathering techniques and methods. Interpretations made in this study would not necessarily be fully agreed on by the participants or other observers.

4. The length of time since a specific event occurred could have affected the "lesson learned." The content of the lesson remembered could have changed over time. It is also possible that the subject needed time away from the experience before he/she could have seen the event as a learning opportunity. Also, some lessons could have been clearly identified without the subject's being able to identify the triggering event (if such an event even existed).

One delimiting factor needs to be identified to clarify further the goals of the project. The study was designed to measure a sample of the 29 Michigan community college presidents.

Definition of Terms

The following terms are defined in the context in which they are used in this dissertation:

Community college president. The chief executive and operative officer of the two-year institution; the person appointed by the governing body to represent it in day-to-day operations. In this study, the term chief academic officer is used synonymously with community college president.

Key events/experiences. Things that affected the leadership style of the community college president: particular job tasks; interactions with specific people; hardships; or other significant events or periods of transition (course work, early jobs, personal experiences).

Lessons learned. Leadership skills or patterns of thinking acquired as a result of the events/experiences--in other words, the information learned as a result of having experienced the already mentioned event/transition.

Michigan public community junior college. One of the 29 institutions in Michigan providing services consistent with the basic functions of a comprehensive community college, receiving state and local financial assistance in part through taxes, and offering the two-year associate's degree as the highest level.

Respondents. The Michigan public community junior college presidents who participated in the study by granting an interview.

Organization of the Dissertation

The dissertation is organized into five chapters. Chapter I was intended to provide the reader with an understanding of the major points of emphasis for this project. The purpose, limitations, and focus of the study were presented, along with the research questions, a statement of importance, and definitions of key terms.

Chapter II contains a review of the pertinent literature involving career studies of community college presidents, leadership-development experiences on the job, life-events experiences, and the coping process. Literature on adult transitions and the interview process as a research tool is also reviewed.

Chapter III contains an elaboration of the research design, methodology, population, and methods of data collection that were used in the research project. The data-analysis procedures employed in the study are explained.

Chapter IV includes the results of the data analysis. The specific groups of experiences and lessons learned are categorized and identified. Frequency tables and lists of examples are employed to answer the research questions posed in Chapter I.

A summary of the study, recommendations for further research, and reflections based on the research process are included in Chapter V.

CHAPTER II

REVIEW OF RELATED LITERATURE

Introduction

The literature review is divided into four major sections that reflect four fields of study being brought together in this project. The review includes literature relevant to the study of leadership development, development of community college presidents, transitions/styles of coping, and the use of the interview technique as a data-gathering procedure.

Leadership Development

The impetus for this study came from the field of leadership development. Much time and money are spent in training and developing people in leadership positions. Gordon (1988) reported that 124,840 American organizations with 100 or more employees would deliver almost 1.2 billion hours of formal training to 37.5 million people in 1988. The largest share of that training would go to middle managers within the organization. Gordon estimated that 77.8% of all organizations with 100 or more employees would train some middle managers that year. He went on to report that first-time supervisors are offered training in 72.5% of the American companies with more than 100 employees and that executives are provided formal training and development opportunities in 64.5% of

American companies. Gordon stated that senior managers who receive training average 33.6 hours of formal training. When projected nationally, this means that 1.09 million senior managers received a total of 36.6 million hours of formal training in 1988.

In Training Magazine's Industry Report for 1988, Gordon stated that "management courses again represent the most common species of employer-sponsored training in the United States. And as usual, supervisory, technical and communication skills follow close behind" (p. 57).

Formal training experiences for leaders encompass many different content areas and styles of knowledge acquisition. Gordon (1988) suggested that management skills/development training includes such topics as time management, leadership training, hiring/selection, stress management, listening, team building, motivation, delegation, conducting meetings, finance, and ethics. The vast majority of this reported training occurs as a result of either internal training programs or seminars or conferences.

Kirkpatrick (1988) stated that attending such seminars can provide only the "science" of management (i.e., knowledge and skills). He noted that "the art of management is the real payoff because it means applying that knowledge to bring about desired results" (p. 59). The more informal type of training of on-the-job coaching is what Kirkpatrick meant by the "art of management" (p. 62). This informal type of training exists in every organization. Gordon (1988) suggested it takes place regularly among co-workers, between supervisors and employees, and between manager and

supervisor. "It occurs during the simple accumulation of experience on the job. It's real, it's valuable, and it represents an enormous 'hidden investment' in training and development" (Gordon, 1988, p. 52).

Kirkpatrick (1988) and Goldstein (1986) agreed, however, that informal on-the-job training is not always most effective. "Sometimes it is effective; sometimes not" (Kirkpatrick, 1988, p. 62). Many on-the-job training programs are not planned, and the trainer is given no advance training. Job performance is more important than taking time to train someone. There is also no allowance for error, as performance is the criterion for success (Goldstein, 1986).

With this emphasis on success, employees need to be able to use the skills they acquired in formal education and training settings and also to acquire new skills in and from the workplace. Drucker (1966) suggested that many skills are nothing more than habits or a complex set of practices. These skills can always be learned through the process of repeated practice. He believed, however, that the information needs to be shared clearly and opportunities given to people to practice in the workplace.

Drucker's notions, although sound in theory, might be lacking in application and reality, given the divergent viewpoint of Livingston (1971) as he talked about the myth of the well-educated manager. Livingston believed that formal training programs for management in both universities and industry fail to develop the

traits, knowledge, and skills essential to career success. He also believed that the tasks that are most important in getting results are left to the individual to be learned on the job. The problem with this concept is that no one teaches the person how to learn. Livingston's ideas suggest the following conclusions: (a) that formal training programs and courses fall short in providing the necessary tools for the leader to do his/her job most appropriately; and (b) that the informal "learn on the job" notion fails because employees are not taught how to learn from their experiences and are not given the time to change old habits or to develop new skills and knowledge.

Given these conclusions, it would be a mistake to assume that no learning takes place in either the formal educational arena or as a result of on-the-job training. However, it suggests the notion that the people in these positions are required to learn a lot on their own, to extract from many experiences the knowledge that will prepare them for the next project or possible job promotion. If people on the job are not taught how to learn from their own experiences, as Livingston suggested, what do these people learn on their own? Are there specific projects, job tasks, or people to help these leaders acquire the necessary information to succeed on their own?

Studies conducted through the Center for Creative Leadership began to look more closely at these questions regarding helpful experiences and the lessons learned from these events. In 1982, McCall, Lombardo, and Morrison began studying how managers learned

to be executives and leaders. They initially interviewed 86 executives "whose development had resulted in success--they had made it to the top levels of their organization" (Lombardo, 1986, p. 7). The purpose of the study was to find out from the leaders what experiences in their lives and careers had most contributed to their success. The leaders were asked to describe "the three most important events in their development as leaders . . . a description of the event . . . and a statement of what they had learned from the event" (p. 7).

In addition to the initial 86 executives interviewed (the data from 79 were used; Lindsey, Homes, & McCall, 1987), three further studies using an open-ended survey developed from the initial interviews acquired data on 112 other leaders. After all the data were combined, Lindsey et al. grouped the key events into four major categories: (a) developmental assignments; (b) hardships; (c) other people; and (d) other significant events.

Five types of assignment events were found to hold special importance for the leaders. "They were the project/task force assignments, line to staff switches, start-ups, fix-its and assignments involving a major change in scope" (Lombardo, 1986, p. 7). The key events involving other people--good and bad bosses and role models--also focused on "short-lived events involving a person . . . doing something to another person . . . that had a visible impact" (Lindsey et al., 1987, p. 161). The authors called this series of events "values playing out." The events involving

hardships included business failures/mistakes, demotions or "lousy jobs," subordinate performance problems, and personal trauma. Finally, the category called other significant events included coursework, early work experiences, and purely personal events that involved a "diverse array of off-the-job experiences" (Lindsey et al., 1987, p. 175).

Lindsey et al. not only asked the leaders for specific events but also for a description of what these people said they had learned from the event(s). From the 16 major events identified came 34 lessons, which were clustered into five general areas: (a) agenda setting; (b) handling relationships; (c) values; (d) executive temperament; and (e) personal awareness (McCall et al., 1988).

Lindsey et al. found that, in general, lessons contained in agenda setting, handling relationships, and executive temperament were elicited by developmental assignments; the lessons in basic values came from other people; and personal-awareness lessons developed as a result of hardships. (The fourth category, "other significant events," has not been elaborated on as much as the more career-oriented categories already mentioned.)

In their book The Lessons of Experience, McCall et al. (1988) continued with the three clusters of key events (job assignments, other people, and hardships) and elaborated on the lessons learned from these experiences. The authors stated two other goals of their research. They believed it is important for leaders to take charge of their own development. "By understanding the rich variety of

experience . . . [leaders] can make better decisions regarding career moves and make better use of the lessons their experiences offer to them" (p. 13).

McCall et al. realized, however, that businesses are not in business to develop people. Therefore, the second goal of the research was to "help organizations do a better job of development by making more efficient and thoughtful use of the developmental experiences they have to offer their high-potential managers" (p. 13). For example, it is important for the organization to enhance its tolerance for mistakes; otherwise, managers will probably not admit to them or learn much from them. McCall et al. found from their research that, by asking leaders about critical job experiences, a specific list of developmental jobs was derived. They also found that, by evaluating the jobs identified as key to development, they were able to get a better idea of the kinds of challenges the jobs presented, as well as the specific lessons learned.

McCall et al. were not just supportive of the informal developmental experiences. They found that specific courses that proved to be most helpful were undertaken later in a leader's life, were attended voluntarily, and usually dealt with general management and business issues or self-analysis. Participants saw high-impact courses as a kind of test ("Am I as good as executives from _____ company?"; McCall et al., 1988, p. 182). The challenge, then, is to

make better use of on-the-job experiences in order to help leaders learn from their failures and other past events.

Learning from the past is one of the five "key events" Bennis and Nanus (1985) described in their book, Leaders. In their research, they studied 60 chief executive officers (CEOs) from Fortune's top-200 list. The authors were interested in learning self-perceived strengths and weaknesses, identifying any experiences in the CEO's life that significantly influenced his/her management philosophy/style, and identifying major decision points during the CEO's career and his/her current feelings about those choices. In their research, Bennis and Nanus identified traits of an effective leader and the necessary skills that effective leaders need to use: (a) accept people as they are; (b) deal with problems/people in the present but be willing to learn from the past; (c) treat others with courteous attention; (d) trust others; and (e) be able to do without constant approval from others.

Bennis and Nanus reported on the importance of having and maintaining a positive self-regard. Effective leaders recognize their own strengths and compensate for weaknesses. They are eager to receive feedback as they continue to make adjustments regarding their professional behaviors. An effective leader's response to failure is to see the failure as a new beginning. Failure is seen as a challenge and an opportunity to succeed.

Leaders by Bennis and Nanus has added much to the field of leadership development, not just because of the list of "effective" traits and skills the authors described but also because they

contributed to the field the realization that effective leaders at all levels in an organization learn. They learn from the past and take advantage of opportunities to learn about themselves. This willingness to learn from others, about oneself and others, is a major component of leadership development. This learning is more informal, but it appears to be guided by the effective leader's desire to learn and not to be intimidated by the possible outcomes.

Randall (1967) suggested that leaders take responsibility for their own growth, both professionally and personally. The development of leaders is done (a) formally, through degree programs, courses, and seminars; (b) informally, with on-the-job training; and (c) through self-directed learning based on events and experiences.

Development of Community College Presidents

A void exists in the literature surrounding the subject of professional development for community college presidents. Thus, inferences had to be drawn when compiling this review. Much of the research only hinted at the emphasis of the current project or dealt with university, not community college, presidents.

Vaughan (1986) stated that, "in spite of the vastness of the community college movement, little is known about the men and women who served in the movement's vanguard" (p. 1). He went on to say that "a starting place for studying the community college presidency is a closer examination of the individuals who occupy the position" (p. 9). Vaughan wrote that community colleges are into their second

generation of presidents; more than 50% of the CEOs have been presidents in their current jobs for five years or less. So, who are today's presidents and how do they develop and grow professionally?

When focusing on the preparation and development of community college presidents, several researchers have expressed fairly negative perceptions. Kauffman (1980) said that no preparation is provided for people going into the position of president of a university (or community college). Lahti (1973) suggested that industrial organizations could serve as a model for higher education regarding the training of potential management talent, by

providing extensive in-service development . . . requiring commitment in terms of organizational priorities and resources. Higher education has largely ignored this concept; the primary source for filling key managerial positions is untrained, upwardly mobile academicians who take their turn in the classroom and then become a part of the higher education establishment. This source of leadership leaves much to be desired and results in administration who come to their posts as amateurs, lacking management skills and the knowledge of application to management systems. (p. 34)

To deal with this lack of knowledge and experience, Henderson (1960) suggested a partial solution. Because presidents are often recruited from the academic ranks, with little or no training for the role of administrators, some in-service programs as well as full-time summer sessions and institutes could be offered. Irwin (1975) suggested specific programs, such as the Institute for Educational Management, the Academy for Educational Development, the College Administrator Development Program, and other advanced administrative training programs (including planning, management

skills, decision making, policy making, modern management and supervision, and executive grid management training).

Henderson (1960) also believed that postdoctoral programs as well as specific workshops can serve a useful purpose if they are offered in a timely fashion. One major drawback that Henderson was aware of, however, is that the role of president can divert the professional from the formal training programs and institutes attended. He wrote:

The nonscholarly activities of fund raising, plant erection and public relations are integral to the function of educating, but they consume enormous amounts of nervous energy and interfere seriously with the performance of the role as chairman and leader of the faculty. Previous scholarship in Latin or in chemistry does not prepare a man to work with architects or to sell budgetary deficits to donors or legislators. Nor does it prepare him to deal effectively with temperamental and cantankerous faculty. Although success in these aspects of administration may often be the result of special qualities of personality, the high rate of turnover in presidencies may in part be caused by fumbling due in turn to lack of administrative training or experience. (p. 19)

Formal training, which would reflect both breadth and depth of education as symbolized by the possession of the doctorate, is a necessary but not a sufficient condition for the person in the role of community college president. Lahti (1973) believed that the two-year college needs leaders with personal experience supplemented by a thorough knowledge of the theoretical research. Managerial skills can be applied to specific situations, based on previous learning opportunities. Such "teachable moments" provide the experience necessary to make the required decisions.

Attempts have been made to suggest specific qualifications and kinds of knowledge or experiences that should be required of people holding the position of community college president. Henderson (1960) suggested that the individual in the role of community college president must be alert to and understand the problems of higher education, be acquainted with curriculum design, have studied some special area of human relations including personnel administration, have acquired some knowledge in the area of development and financing of higher education, and have a working understanding of organizations and an ability to coordinate special programs across the campus.

Lahti (1973) suggested that some of the necessary qualifications for the chief administrator include:

power with people, intelligence, flexibility, guts, integrity, confidence, and inner drive. He must be able to learn, think and understand quickly; make sound judgements; communicate effectively; . . . react quickly; . . . and get things done through others. He must be able to lead, plan, organize . . . [show] empathy . . . and charisma or personal charm. . . . [He must be] a generalist, . . . creative, able to benefit from experience, . . . delegate [and] remain informed. (p. 39)

Rouche, Baker, and Rose (1988) also discussed several traits of the effective community college president, including being a visionary and being able to influence human behavior. The individual "must possess the synergy to create something new out of something old" (p. 50). The community college president must be able to help others understand the visions and how they affect the environment. The president must also be an effective communicator who facilitates the transition from the past toward the new vision.

These studies, as interesting and valuable as they are, neglected to mention how a community college president acquires the skills, knowledge base, and talents necessary to be effective within that administrative role. White (1957) pointed out that "no course of study, even participation in institutes, can take the place of the education that comes from experience. And, that is an education that can never be finished no matter how long one's administrative experiences may be" (pp. 10-11).

Few attempts have been made to identify general patterns of experiences that provide opportunities for learning by community college presidents. Vaughan (1986), Peterson (1972), and Ashmore (1978) discussed some of the experiences, critical incidents, or kinds of pressures that community college presidents endure on a regular basis.

Vaughan (1986) focused on the self-reported perceptions of successes, professional failures, and personal failures. The successes involved such areas as having the community college be accessible to older adults, giving the faculty a sense of participation in the governance process, and being able to share knowledge about the community college with other individuals across the country. Professional failures included trying to be all things to all people, promising too much and not delivering, and an inability to state clearly the mission of the community college to the public. Personal failures included such things as not getting special interest groups together, letting personal dreams fall

through the cracks, allowing far too many student failures, not listening to other people, and caving in to collective bargaining. Vaughan's lists were very general, and it was questionable whether the items had been categorized appropriately.

Peterson (1972) undertook a more rigorous endeavor for his dissertation. He was interested in identifying critical incidents that affected new and experienced presidents of selected colleges and universities in the Midwest. He interviewed 26 presidents using a self-report procedure. He identified events as being effective or ineffective, according to the presidents' perceptions. Peterson also categorized the incidents as being either internal to the college or university (students, faculty, administration, or governing boards) or external to the school (local citizens, the press, or the state).

Peterson's results uncovered specific critical problem categories, including finance, campus unrest, staffing, governance, controlling, governing board, public relations, subordinate ineffectiveness, student relations, compensation, and employee relations. These critical problems provided opportunities for learning and perhaps served as desirable preparation for enhancing presidential effectiveness.

Ashmore (1978) presented a paper at the Summer Council of Presidents in 1977, focusing on some of the pressures that presidents of colleges and universities are facing now that did not exist to this extent 25 years ago. His list of pressures included working closely with vested-interest groups, declining enrollments,

shrinking budgets, pressures to achieve more with less, competition for nongovernmental funds, unions, the federal government (regulations, forms, reports, visits, quotas), the news media, the age of questioning/suspicion, and an increased feeling of being disliked. These reported events are bound to affect the community college president, as are the other critical incidents and experiences discussed. (For a more personal daily account of events and pressures experienced by a university president, see Berendzen's (1986) book, Is My Armor Straight.)

When a president experiences different pressures and problems, opportunities occur for informal learning and professional development. How do presidents choose to learn from these events, and what new knowledge do the presidents take with them as a result of having experienced the incidents? Carbone (1981), Kauffman (1980), Brown (1979), and Borland (1976) addressed this subject.

In his research on presidential passages, Carbone (1981) established career ladders for individuals who progressed to the role of president. He identified post-president trends or positions and discussed specific ways in which presidents reported how they learned. The presidents said they learned from the past ("experience is a good teacher," p. 67), from mentors and solid faculty members, and from specific administrative experiences. The presidents learned several lessons from these sources. They reported learning to be flexible, tough-skinned, and in control of

their egos. They also learned to realize that, as president, "you will never make a 'right' decision in the eyes of at least a part of your public and employees" (p. 67).

Kauffman (1980) was interested in the predecessor's effect on the new president, as well as how the new president "learned the ropes" of the position. He thought that the board of directors needed to have an active interest in the president and to support that person as much as possible. Kauffman identified three mechanisms of helping to prepare people for the role of president. These mechanisms were mentoring, grooming likely candidates, and sponsoring someone within the organization. These suggestions entail a fairly active informal learning process but offer a wide variety of developmental opportunities.

Brown (1978) described developmental opportunities as revitalization strategies. Because change and growth are constants within an organization, Brown believed it was imperative to stay fresh and effective. Self-growth is important because there are few opportunities for supervision and coaching. Also, monies for institutes and conferences are hard to justify. Brown stated that, instead, "the obligation for revitalization falls less to the institution than to the individual leader" (p. 35). Presidents maintain their vitality by having role models, usually colleagues. "Most leaders consciously copy an idea from one colleague, a technique from another. In the school of later learning, our colleagues become our faculty" (p. 36). When an individual thinks an adviser understands the circumstance and then recommends a

decision, that individual feels he/she can take greater risks and thus feels greater motivation. A third factor contributing to vitality is having access to the role models. Support networks are critical as these people often ask the "penetrating questions." The fourth means for maintaining vitality is through habit and intent ("the pursuit of explicit activities that will stimulate self-learning," p. 36). Routine, therefore, according to Brown, enhances self-learning. The fifth means of enhancing vitality is through the recognition and use of specifics. Specific failures or specific actions promote the consideration of alternatives and new theories.

Brown identified 12 revitalization strategies, including reading, getting away (travel or sabbatical), participating in national associations, observing role models--especially former bosses, exercising regularly, attending workshops, drafting major speeches or reports, keeping up in scholarly discipline, maintaining support of professional networks, maintaining a cultural life beyond the job, getting involved in off-campus projects, and undergoing periodic evaluations. These suggestions provide many opportunities for learning. The strategies suggest the importance of the notion of being a self-directed learner. Brown emphasized the importance of other people for learning to take place.

Borland (1976) also identified the importance of people along with events in facilitating the acquisition of certain presidential career positions in Michigan community colleges. The presidents whom Borland interviewed identified several experiences that

affected them for years to come, both personally and professionally. Several presidents reported growing up during difficult times (the "Great War" and the depression years). They were forced to do without material comforts while growing up, and they learned to depend on others and to work together. They also learned the importance of risk behavior (to not play it safe); and many of the presidents developed early in life a desire to be a leader.

Sometimes a specific person was identified as contributing to the growth of the individual president. Encouragement from a co-worker or supervisor, as well as bad experiences with specific administrators, proved to be events that moved people into higher education administration. Borland stated,

The respondents indicated that while working in positions of leadership, they were visible to their superiors and, in turn, their superiors were visible to them. This relationship often provided the opportunity for the respondents to observe styles of management, the nature of the job, and the character of the president occupying the position. (p. 247)

Much learning occurred (much positive, some negative) as a result of this kind of association and personal influences. Respondents identified certain values and beliefs that were instilled in them when younger but that still affected and motivated them on a daily basis. These values included the importance of hard work, "all people are good," integrity, perseverance, responsibility, being unselfish, the Golden Rule, positive thinking, self-confidence, competitiveness, and the desire to help other people. Borland stated that "Michigan community college presidents indicated that, to a great extent, their beliefs and values

orientations have been influenced by their early experiences" (p. 271).

Different people (professors, teachers, coaches, presidents of community colleges, respondents' spouses, family members, or other superiors in the job situation) were reported as being very influential, as were other circumstances, such as rural background, religious training, and meager family finances. These situations are all examples of possible events that could have an influence on the community college president. Borland looked briefly at these events/experiences and the lessons learned but was more interested in other career perceptions and strategies of the community college presidents.

The literature is sparse on community college presidents in the areas of administrative development through life-experience analysis and also concerning self-report reflections on lessons learned from those events, both professional and personal. No formal studies have been conducted with special emphasis being placed on community college presidents' identification of experiences and subsequent lessons learned. Borland (1976) pointed out in his study that much of what administrators learned will most probably result in some level of discomfort, pain, and stress. Vaughan (1986) also reported that the community college president has many opportunities to experience stress on the job (board versus president conflicts, dealing with the union, role ambiguity, not having time for vacations, and poor faculty attitudes).

The next section focuses on the notion of resilience as it pertains to the current study. Brief mention is made of supportive literature in the areas of transitions and life experiences as opportunities for learning.

Transitions/Styles of Coping

Periods of change, including life experiences, are stressful because each involves a conflict between a force that is working to keep things the way they have been and another force that is pushing the individual to move forward and embrace the new conditions. According to Flach (1988),

The psychological changes that accompany stress reactions should lead to a new, more complex and adaptive structure that is . . . different from that which preceded it. . . . We should have learned something from what we have been through. We should emerge . . . more qualified to deal with life's challenges because of our experiences. (p. 5)

Flach was suggesting that life experiences, including career moves, new job tasks, failures, successes, promotions, and interaction with mentors, promote opportunities for change and growth. The natural process of resilience includes an initial breaking down of what was, which is a necessary prelude to personal renewal, growth, and knowledge acquisition. Flach stated, "Every time we have to learn something important that goes against some presumption we previously held dear, disruption must occur" (p. 16).

As the individual deals with these points or moments of extreme change (called bifurcation points), he/she is preparing the self to meet new stresses that undoubtedly lie ahead. The resilient individual who grows from these experiences acquires specific

personality traits, such as a tolerance for pain and discomfort, self-insight, self-respect, an ability to restore self-esteem when it is diminished or temporarily lost, a capacity for learning, and "a perspective on life that offers a vital, evolving philosophy within which we can discover some measure of personal meaning" (Flach, 1988, p. xii).

Did presidents of community colleges experience these "bifurcation points" (stressors) as they moved up their career ladders? What lessons were learned from their early years as president that continued to help later in their professional lives? It is also possible that other experiences, not work related, provided many of the lessons that could have been incorporated for use back in the workplace. Of interest in this study were kinds of experiences that affected community college presidents, as well as the kinds of lessons learned and resultant behavioral changes that occurred.

Schlossberg (1984) described these events or experiences as transitions. "A transition is an event or nonevent resulting in change" (p. 43). Transitions include not only such obvious life changes as obtaining a new job, marriage, or bereavement, but also subtle changes like the loss of career aspirations or an anticipated promotion that never occurred. Levinson (1979) saw transitions as "turning points between stable periods" (p. 49).

In studying transitions or events, it is important to keep in mind the different types of transitions that Schlossberg identified.

She described four types of transitions: those anticipated by the individual, those unanticipated, chronic hassles, and nonevents. The anticipated transitions include "gains or losses" or changes in roles that "predictably occur in the course of the unfolding life cycle" (Pearlin & Leiberma, 1979, p. 220).

The second kind of transition discussed by Schlossberg was the unanticipated transition, which includes the "nonscheduled events" in life. Pearlin (1980) described several kinds of work-related unanticipated transitions. These include "being fired . . . or demoted, having to give up work because of illness . . . being promoted, and leaving one job for a better one. Divorce, separation, . . . premature death of a spouse . . . represent such events in the parental arena" (p. 180). Some of these events were similar to those researched by Holmes and Rahe (1967) and Gunderson and Rahe (1979) as they pertained to future physical illness and the continued stress response.

The third kind of transition Schlossberg described was the chronic-hassle transition, which included recurring themes both at work and personally (Lazarus, 1981, 1984). Personality conflicts at work, misplacing objects, and concern over one's weight are examples of chronic hassles (Lazarus, 1981).

The fourth transition was the nonevent, in which the individual has come to expect something to happen but it never occurs. Schlossberg gave such examples as the promotion that does not occur, "the child that was never born [or] the cancer that did not metastasize" (p. 46).

The different kinds of transitions elaborated on by Schlossberg and also by Bridges (1980) were used as part of an extensive theoretical framework, as were other points brought out by Schlossberg. These guiding principles were kept in mind in conducting the present research. Schlossberg pointed out, for example, that major life events could create hassles--as "a kind of 'ripple effect'" (p. 46). The same transition event could also have different meanings for different people and for the same person at different times. Schlossberg stated that "a transition is a transition only if it is so defined by the person experiencing it" (p. 44). She encouraged researchers to identify the context in which the transition takes place, the "relationship of person to transition [personal, interpersonal, community]; [and] the setting in which transition occurs [self, family, friends, work, health, economics]" (p. 47). Also, what was the perceived effect of the transition on the individual (how much did the transition "alter his or her daily life"?) (p. 52).

It must be kept in mind that length of time since the event occurred also influences the perceived effect for the individual. In other words, the person's response to the transition is another factor to consider. Schlossberg reported on a model developed by Adams, Hayes, and Hopson in 1976, involving a seven-stage process: (a) immobilization, (b) denial, (c) self-doubt, (d) letting go, (e) testing out, (f) search for meaning in which "the individual begins to ask "What did I learn from the experience?" and (g) integration.

The importance of these notions for the present study involved attempting to recognize the stage in which the president was, regarding the specific transition/event. It was possible that the presidents were in some of the earlier stages of the transition process and were not able to identify the lessons learned. This appeared to be an inherent weakness of the study.

In summary, life experiences and transitions promote stress and provide opportunities for change and growth. At some time in the process, people are able to learn from the transition and be more resilient to and better equipped to handle future changes or events. The study was designed with the intent of identifying some of these experiences and transitions for community college presidents, and was focused on identifying a pattern of lessons learned from participating in the events.

To identify these events and the lessons learned from the experiences, the necessary information was obtained using interview techniques. In the following section, the issue of interview procedures is discussed and a case made for the use of that data-collection tool.

The Interview Process

The interview, according to Kerlinger (1973), is "a face-to-face interpersonal role situation in which one person, the interviewer, asks a person being interviewed, the respondent, questions designed to obtain answers pertinent to the research problem" (p. 481). Bogdan and Biklen (1982) stated that the

interview is often used to "gather descriptive data in the subjects' own words, so that the researcher can develop insight on how subjects interpret some piece of the world" (p. 135).

Sundberg (1977) stated that the interview is one of the most common and most effective means of collecting data in the area of life changes. "A person looking back over the course of life is usually able to identify a number of important shifts or choice points" (p. 95). The key is to find a technique that allows the individual a chance to share those points, like the interview method.

Borland (1976) found the interview method to be a vital data-gathering procedure for his study involving Michigan community college presidents and their career perceptions. Eckhardt (1978) also used the interview as the main data-collection tool as he focused on community college presidents and the relationship between task performance and structural characteristics of the specific community college. Peterson (1972) interviewed college and university presidents as he focused on the identification of critical incidents that influenced the effectiveness of new and experienced presidents.

Arman (1986) used an open-ended interview process to collect data on the topic of career preparation of college presidents and chief academic officers. He thought that the questions, to be most useful, needed to be open ended to permit participants an opportunity to provide as much information as possible, in any format they desired. Putman (1986) used the interview as a prime

descriptive-study technique when she studied the role, function, and influence of district administrators on curricular change in a multi-college community college district.

Besides the dissertations in which the interview process has effectively been used, other research has also successfully employed that technique. Vaillant (1977) described his decision to use the interview process and descriptive/qualitative research as follows:

While describing the adaptive maneuvers of these men, I was repeatedly reminded that their lives were too human for science, too beautiful for numbers, too sad for diagnosis, and too immortal for bound journals. Human beings need science, but science never does human beings justice. The . . . subjects deserve better than to be regarded as guinea pigs. (p. 11)

Vaillant talked of his responsibility to his interviewees and thus the choice of data-collection devices.

Merton, Fiske, and Kendall (1956) used the interview "to elicit the respondent's own frame of reference and subjective perspectives" (p. 247). Bennis and Nanus (1985), in describing their methodology, stated that the three interview questions asked of the participants "were the pivots around which the entire discussion revolved and they elicited rich, lively, and juicy responses. There's no other way to describe them" (p. 24).

Therefore, in this study, the interview process was used to apprehend all the "juicy" responses possible. Young (1966) summarized the positive aspects of the interview method of data collection as follows:

The objectives of the interview may be exchange of ideas and experiences, eliciting of information pertaining to a wide

range of data in which the interviewee may wish to . . . define his present. . . . Every verbal response and nonverbal reaction may be an "eye opener" for a whole new train of thought. An answer may not be only a response to a question but also a stimulus to a progressive series of other relevant statements.

For purposes of obtaining . . . an intimate full account of a person's experience, attitudes, and values . . . it is important to gain a "portrait of human personality" which is broad enough to encompass the social background that governs his present scheme of life, and deep enough to reveal inner strivings, tensions, wishes and changes in his behavioral relations. In free flowing accounts, interviewees may suggest explanations of their behavior which may account for their motivations and actions and provide new insights not afforded by other exploratory techniques. (pp. 215-16)

Much invaluable information has been collected by using the interview process for major research studies and textbooks. The popular literature also contains its share of material generated from the use of the interview technique (Gould, 1978; Sheehy, 1976, 1981, 1988; Terkel, 1974, 1988). Problems and special precautions also exist when considering the use of an interview procedure. These considerations are discussed in more depth in the methodology chapter.

Chapter Summary

Four areas of study were reviewed in this chapter. Each area is a major component as it applies to the current research project. The leadership-development literature reflected the findings of Bennis and Nanus, McCall et al., and Lindsey et al., which laid the groundwork for this study. Research on the community college president reflected a gap in the area of administrative development as a result of on-the-job training. Much has been written about formal training, but the field is lacking in studies reflecting the

benefits of a more informal training process. Presidents experience many events in the role of chief academic officer and also in other professional roles, as well as events in a more personal realm. These experiences provide opportunities for learning.

The third component for this study involved resilience and life transitions. Presidents can use what they have learned from life experiences as they deal with new challenges and changes in the future. The fourth area of interest was the data-collection technique of interviewing. It was believed that this procedure would enhance the quality of data collected and enrich the findings of the study.

Chapter III covers the research methodology and the procedures that were used in the study.

CHAPTER III

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY AND PROCEDURES

Introduction

The design of this study was descriptive and exploratory. Interview procedures were used for data-collection purposes. The writer investigated the life experiences, both professional and personal, that most affected the community college president. The participants were asked not only to reflect on their life experiences but also to offer opinions as to what "lessons" they had learned from having experienced those events.

The population for this study consisted of the presidents from the 29 Michigan community colleges. Presidents were called and asked to volunteer for this study. Every attempt was made to obtain a stratified sample of presidents representing large, medium, and small institutions.

A set of structured interview questions was developed for use in this study. The interviews consisted of a series of guiding questions that allowed the interviewee freedom to respond in an open fashion. Follow-up questions were used at appropriate times to gain more specific information. It was found that the probes assisted in the acquisition of specific examples, which were considered rich data.

Each interview was scheduled and tape-recorded for later analysis. Permission was obtained to use a tape recorder. The researcher also took notes during the interview and recorded key phrases for reference to follow-up questions and identification of nonverbal impressions. As an additional source of data, the presidents were asked to submit a copy of a recent vita.

In the remaining sections of this chapter, the following topics are covered: subjects of the study (individual and institutional); project design; data-collection procedures; the interview process; and the data-analysis procedures used in the study.

Subjects

The population from which the sample was taken was the 29 Michigan community college presidents. Fourteen presidents were contacted and asked to participate in this study. The basis for their selection involved variables such as enrollment size of the interviewee's school, as well as gender and race of the different presidents. Subjective projections were also made considering the presidents' willingness to participate. Twelve presidents responded positively to the invitation and took part in the interview process.

The 12 presidents who participated in the study were guaranteed anonymity and were promised that their specific responses would not be credited to them by name. Therefore, some specific descriptive data pertaining to the presidents cannot be shared. For example, the average age of the participants was 50 years. However, no range of ages can be shared for fear of breaching the participants'

confidentiality. Most presidents were between the ages of 46 and 55.

Regarding gender and race representation, Michigan has two racial-minority and two female community college presidents. The sample of 12 presidents studied in this project fairly and accurately represented both groups.

The average number of years of being president of the current community college (in the current study) was eight years. Most presidents interviewed had been in this position for less than 10 years. The vast majority of the presidents interviewed had been the president of only one institution. The average length of time spent in the current institution was 11.5 years. Most participants had served in some capacity at the current community college somewhere between 4 and 15 years.

The presidents sampled did represent a stratified sampling of the community colleges in Michigan when enrollment was the variable. Table 3.1 represents the classification of community colleges in terms of thousands of students for the Fall 1988 enrollment period and the number of institutions that were represented in this study.

Sixteen Michigan community colleges (55%) had a Fall Term 1988 enrollment of between 1,000 and 5,000 students. Four of the 16 schools (25%) took part in this study and accounted for 33% of the sample. Six Michigan community colleges (21%) had a Fall Term 1988 enrollment of between 5,000 and 10,000 students, which accounted for 42% of the colleges in the current study (five out of the six colleges took part in this study). Likewise, four (14%) Michigan

community colleges had enrollments of between 10,000 and 20,000 students Fall Term 1988. Two of the four schools were represented in the sample for this study, which was 17% of the total sample. Finally, three schools (10%) had a population greater than 20,000 students Fall Term 1988. One of the three (33%) with more than 20,000 students took part in this study and accounted for 8% of the sample.

Table 3.1.--Michigan community colleges and representation in current study.

Enrollment Size (in 1,000s) Fall 1988	Number of Schools in Michigan	% Total Michigan Schools	Number of Schools in Sample	% of Sample	% of Schools by Size That Took Part in Current Study
1-5	16	55%	4	33%	25%
5-10	6	21%	5	42%	83%
10-20	4	14%	2	17%	50%
20+	3	10%	1	8%	33%
Total	29	100%	12	100%	

Source: Statistics compiled by Michigan Department of Education, "Fall Postsecondary Enrollment Report" (Lansing: Michigan Department of Education, December 22, 1988).

It is evident that this study did not equally represent the community colleges with enrollments of 1,000 to 5,000 students and those with enrollments of 5,000 to 10,000 students. Presidential time constraints and peer selection practices impeded the acquisition of a representative sampling being acquired. The other

two classifications of community colleges in Michigan appeared to be fairly well represented in the study.

Project Design

This descriptive study is considered qualitative in nature. Qualitative method is "an umbrella term covering many different interpretive techniques, most of which describe, translate, or otherwise enhance the meaning, not the frequency, of naturally occurring phenomena in the social world" (Putman, 1986, p. 98). Mintzberg (1979) warned against research designs that produce results that are "significant only in the statistical sense of the word" (p. 583). Simple methodologies measured in real organizational (individual) terms are preferred. This means, however, according to Mintzberg, "first of all, getting out into the real organizations and interacting with the real people within those institutions/ organizations" (p. 583). The time is right to return to an emphasis on more open-ended data and to consider the value of such alternative methods. Mintzberg cautioned, however, that the chosen methodology be complementary to the overall focus, form, and emphasis of the study.

The focus of this study was on enhancing the knowledge base on the community college president population in Michigan. A decision was made to design a more in-depth investigation as opposed to one that could have offered only a more surface understanding of the phenomena under investigation. The open-ended interview process was seen as the means to acquire the most useful information in the time allotted.

Data-Collection Procedures

The goal for this study was to interview 12 of the 29 community college presidents in Michigan. It was believed that 12 participants could adequately represent the population of 29 presidents if factors such as size of institution and presidential characteristics, such as race and gender, were all taken into consideration. This investigator was also working under the premise that community college presidents are very busy people with many demands for their time placed on them. It was important for the success of this research to find a means of gaining presidential acceptance of the project as early as possible in the process. Given these assumptions, it was decided to forego the notion of random sampling and to seek participation, at least initially, based on specific invitation offered to specific presidents.

One faculty member who was serving on the researcher's doctoral committee knew several of the Michigan community college presidents and volunteered to make the initial telephone calls to explain the purpose of the study. Presidents were selected, based in part on three criteria: (a) it was believed that these people would be more inclined to initially accept the invitation to participate in the study; (b) these presidents would be willing to provide helpful feedback in case problems were identified; and (c) this group of presidents would be willing to offer the names of other Michigan community college presidents who they thought would participate in the study and who would also prosper from the experience. Once the

assumptions were identified and the initial criteria established for early invitation, the data-collection process began.

Data were collected between January and March 1989. In total, 14 presidents were contacted and asked to participate in the study. Twelve agreed to be interviewed.

The aforementioned faculty member made initial phone calls to five Michigan community college presidents to ask them to participate in the study. (Before the phone calls were made, a general outline of points to discuss in the call was developed. A detailed outline of the Introduction to the Study Contact Form appears in Appendix A.) Four of the five presidents contacted readily agreed to participate in the study. The researcher contacted two other presidents whose names had been furnished to him by the faculty member. Both presidents agreed to participate in the study.

Similar content was shared in the initial conversations for both the faculty member and the investigator. The main difference was that when the faculty member made the initial contact, the researcher followed up with another phone call (within two days of the faculty phone contact) to clarify any questions and to schedule the interview.

When scheduling the interviews, it was stated that the meetings were designed to last a maximum of two hours. Some presidents responded that they could not take that amount of time and asked if a one-hour or one-and-a-half-hour interview would be satisfactory. It was decided that, at the risk of losing the ability to ask

follow-up questions and gain more data, an hour and one-half with the president would still be a "rich" opportunity to gather useful information. (Problems associated with the scheduling of the interviews, as well as interruptions during the interviews, are discussed in more depth in the Recommendations section of Chapter V.)

After the date, time, and location were secured, the president was asked if he/she would send a vita, which would help the interviewer obtain some background information to "tailor" some of the questioning around those specific experiences. All six presidents in the initial group agreed to send a vita (all vitae were received within three days of the initial request). Also requested was permission to audio-tape the interview to ensure that all the data would be captured for future analysis. Confidentiality was discussed, and the presidents were reminded how the data would be analyzed and presented in the dissertation. Several presidents expressed their appreciation over the concern about confidentiality, and all of them gave their permission to be taped. The tapes were used to verify and recheck interview responses at a later time. The interviewer took notes to record immediate observations and to enhance the likelihood of appropriate follow-up questions.

After the phone contact, a letter of confirmation with date, time, and location was sent to the president (see Appendix B for a copy of the confirmation letter), as well as a list of the questions

that would be used during the interview. All presidents received the questions at least one week before the interview.

One interview had to be rescheduled because of inclement weather. Because of schedule conflicts, the interview had to be conducted over the phone. Sudman (1967) found, after comparing data from personal interviews with telephone interview results, that "in none of these experiments was there any indication that the telephone results were less satisfactory than those obtained by personal interviews" (p. 67). Upon analyzing the recorded data, this investigator concurred with Sudman's results.

At the conclusion of the interview process (which is discussed in more depth in the next section), the presidents were asked if they would be willing to identify other presidents they thought might be willing to go through the same process. Most presidents were willing to mention one or two other presidents (some of whom had already been called in the first phase of the process). A list containing five new names was obtained through this process, and was furnished to the faculty member so that some degree of consistency could prevail. A similar process was followed in the initial phone contacts, and all five presidents agreed to participate in the study. The same procedures were used with this group regarding follow-up phone calls, scheduling, and the actual interview process. Upon completion of this "second wave" of interviewing, two presidents volunteered the names of two additional presidents. These names were supplied to the faculty member, who, once again,

made initial contact with the presidents. One of the two presidents agreed to be interviewed, and the same procedure followed.

In all, 14 presidents were contacted, and 12 agreed to be interviewed. The "three waves" of participant identification did not appear to promote differences in types of responses or the number of responses shared.

The interview questions were developed to help answer the research questions posed in Chapter I. The impetus for several of the items originated from McCall et al.'s (1988) book, The Lessons of Experience. Other items were developed from Bennis and Nanus's (1985) Leaders. The questions used during the interview process are as follows:

1. What past events (either professional or personal) have had the most impact on you in your role as a community college president?
2. What "lessons" have you learned from those experiences?
3. Receiving helpful feedback regarding one's professional performance can certainly influence future behavior in the workplace. Please talk about the kind of feedback you receive from others. Is it helpful feedback? Who gives you most of your feedback? What would you change about the feedback you receive from others?
4. When you reflect back over the people who have had an effect on you--which people influenced you the most, i.e., who taught you the most? How did that person (or those people) teach you? Would you call these people mentors?
5. How do you think you have changed over the years during your tenure as a community college president?
6. What part have events in your personal life played in your growth as a leader?
7. What has been most "fun" for you in your role as president? Please give examples of situations you have enjoyed the most.

8. What is the most significant thing you have learned as an adult --the one thing you would pass on to another person if you could?

The Interview Process

An interview schedule was chosen for several reasons. The interview is flexible and adaptable, and leads can be followed up. Isaac and Michael (1982) suggested that the interview model could help establish rapport and also be used as a means of assuring the effectiveness of communication between the respondent and the interviewer. Kerlinger (1973) stated that open-ended questions "supply a frame of reference for respondents' answers, but put a minimum of restraint on the answers and their expression" (p. 483).

The responses to open-ended questions could suggest possibilities of relations and hypotheses. Kerlinger stated, "Respondents will sometimes give unexpected answers that may indicate the existence of relations not originally anticipated" (p. 484). The use of follow-up questions reflects a fairly specific kind of interview procedure called the semi-structured interview. Borg and Gall (1983) stated that the semi-structured interview is "generally most appropriate for interview studies in education. It provides a desirable combination of objectivity and depth and often permits gathering valuable data that would not be successfully obtained by any other approach" (p. 442).

Borg and Gall discussed three potential sources of error present in the interview process that should be taken into consideration when developing the interview questions. The first

source of error concerns the predispositions of the respondent. This includes suspicion about the research, lack of motivation to cooperate, a desire to please the interviewer, or a wish to present oneself in favorable terms. The second source of error relates to predispositions of the interviewer, which include being uncomfortable with the people being interviewed, one's own opinions influencing what is heard/recorded, failure to establish rapport, and having stereotyped expectations for what will be shared. The third source of error relates to the procedures used in conducting the study. Examples include how the study is explained to the respondent, methods used for gaining cooperation, the length of the interview, and where the interview takes place. These factors were taken into consideration when the questions were developed, during the interview, and at the time of data analysis. Taping the interviews served as a means of identifying any sources of error in the interview process. The investigator's experience as a data collector, counselor, and consultant also helped to reduce the likelihood of major interviewer error taking place.

Another way to compensate for the inherent weaknesses of the interview procedure was to provide an opportunity for participants to respond to a telephone interview instead of the face-to-face interview. Isaac and Michael (1982) believed that similar results were achievable using either approach. The telephone interview offers several other specific advantages over the personal interview, such as lower costs, more flexibility of appointment times (day or night), greater access to the population, and the

respondent's ease in his/her own home or office. As stated earlier, a telephone interview was conducted with one president.

The interview questions were used as a point of reference for the discussion. Probing follow-up questions were used when deemed appropriate and written down as a matter of record. The interviewee was told in advance that he/she had the right to ask that the tape recorder be turned off if it was believed to be hindering open discussion. The interviewees were also told that they could end the interview at any time.

Data Analysis

Nine of the 12 interviews took place in the presidents' offices (this included the one telephone interview). Two interviews took place in a hotel where the presidents were staying for a conference, and the other interview took place in a facility where another president's conference was scheduled.

The length of the interviews varied (and the length of the interview did not always concur with the time scheduled for it) from 55 minutes (two presidents) to 2 hours and 40 minutes. The average length of an interview was 1 hour and 32 minutes.

The interviewer usually arrived at the site 30 minutes early and twice was escorted in to see the president at the earlier time. (In both instances the original interview had been scheduled for one hour, but with the early arrival the interviews lasted one and one-half hours.) On only two occasions did the interviewer have to wait

beyond the scheduled appointment time--in each instance for 15 minutes. (Those were both the 55-minute interviews.)

Interruptions during the interview (phone calls or knocks at the door) were a minor issue. Of the nine interviews that took place in presidents' offices, six were interrupted at least once. Two of the three interviews that took place in another facility also were interrupted. The most interruptions that occurred during one interview was five, but most presidents were interrupted one time. Following the interruption, each president was able to get back to the question without asking for a reminder.

The interviews usually started with light discussion on the chosen topic and/or the president's asking the interviewer about his own plans after completion. Once rapport was established, the tape recorder was turned on and the formal interview process began. For the most part, the presidents appeared to be fairly relaxed, and it appeared that some degree of rapport was established with each president. Most of the presidents seemed to be comfortable, engaging, and open, and at the same time they were very direct and matter-of-fact. It is believed that an accurate picture of each president, although abbreviated, at times, was obtained.

Summary of Methodology

The descriptive nature of the study was discussed in this chapter, with emphasis on the development of the interview questions. The procedure for obtaining the sample of presidents and the interview process itself were identified. Impressions of the

interviews, including rapport and interruptions, were briefly explored.

In Chapter IV, the focus is on presenting the data obtained through the interview process. Because the data are qualitative, the analysis must be appropriate to such data. Qualitative data

appear in words rather than in numbers. They may have been collected in a variety of ways (observations, interviews, . . . tape recordings) and are usually "processed" . . . before they are ready for use (via dictation, typing up, editing or transcription), but they remain words, usually organized into an extended text. (Miles & Huberman, 1984, p. 21)

In Chapter IV, narrative description is used when displaying the data acquired from the interviews. Patterns of experiences and lessons learned have been combined into categories. Basic response frequency tabulations and frequency percentages have been calculated for items and total responses for the survey. Because of the descriptive nature of this study, no other statistical techniques were used.

CHAPTER IV

ANALYSIS OF THE RESULTS

Introduction

Little research has been done with community college presidents and the effect of experiences (both professional and personal) on the professional growth of the administrators. Few data have been collated emphasizing the "lessons of experience" learned either before taking the current academic position or during the present tenure of the chief academic officer. The purpose of this study was to identify events or experiences that affected the professional development of the community college presidents. Lessons learned were also identified, as were clusters of events and lessons, if such patterns were noted. Self-report procedures were used to identify those experiences and lessons learned that were thought to help prepare the community college presidents for their role in the organization.

The following research questions were studied:

1. What effect did work and life experiences have on the professional development of community college presidents?
2. What experiences had the greatest effect on the community college presidents: (a) formal training; (b) informal on-the-job training experiences; or (c) personal life experiences?

3. What lessons were learned from these professional experiences that better prepared the administrators for the job tasks associated with the role of community college president?

4. Did certain patterns or themes arise pertaining to the kinds of experiences or the lessons learned for the group of presidents sampled?

5. If patterns of experiences or lessons learned arose, what effect could these data have for the professional development of prospective leaders in the community college environment?

This chapter presents an analysis of the data gathered in the study. Each research question is restated, and the relevant data and results are discussed. (Research Question 5 deals with the more general notion of professional development for prospective community leaders and is dealt with in more depth in Chapter V.)

Research Question 1

What effect do work and life experiences have on the professional development of community college presidents?

The 12 presidents identified 74 "experiences" that they believed had affected their professional development. Specific work experiences accounted for 33 of the reported experiences, and personal life experiences were identified 41 times. Table 4.1 reflects the work and personal experiences as reported by each of the 12 presidents. Presidents' names were not used in this study. Each president was randomly assigned a letter of the alphabet, which is used consistently throughout the dissertation.

Events were identified as work related if the president reported having experienced them as part of his/her professional growth. Life experiences were defined as those events that took place outside the workplace. (The events were identified and categorized by each president during the interview process.)

Table 4.1.--Number of experiences affecting professional development of Michigan community college presidents.

President	Type of Experience		Total by President
	Professional (Work)	Personal (Life)	
A	1	2	3
B	4	-	4
C	5	5	10
D	-	9	9
E	3	4	7
F	1	2	3
G	3	6	9
H	8	2	10
I	-	3	3
J	3	-	3
K	2	-	2
L	3	8	11
Total by type	33	41	74

As can be seen from Table 4.1, each president identified specific experiences affecting his/her professional development. However, only seven (58%) of the presidents verbalized events from both general domains (professional/work and personal/life). Three

(25%) of the presidents focused exclusively on professional/work-related experiences, and two (17%) discussed personal/life event items.

Professional/work experiences involved those situations that took place before the acquisition of the position of president, as well as those that occurred after securing the presidency. Presidents reported that early positions in their careers, whether in the academic arena or not, offered many opportunities for learning. Several presidents talked about the importance of being a teacher, dean, or vice-president or the challenges associated with being given new projects to coordinate. Some of the interviewees talked about how some positions had not met their needs or how responsibilities had been taken away from them.

A few examples of comments made by presidents citing professional/work experiences before acquiring the role of president follow:

I was depended on by a president to do more and more of his job for him. I was effective at it, too!

My first job out of college was that of teacher. I started learning how to treat other people at that time.

I worked in an organization that was heavily into control and rules. I needed out.

I constantly fall back on my experiences in the armed service when I am faced with situations as president.

Professional experiences as president were also identified as being vital in the ongoing development of the president. The interviewees talked about the climate of the organization when they

took over, interactions with the board of trustees, dealing with the union, and outreach activities with different segments of the host community as promoting many learning opportunities.

Examples of comments made by the presidents regarding professional experiences encountered as president that promoted self-growth follow:

Getting involved in union negotiations has been a real challenge. It really is fun!

Having to prepare the staff for change has been a big challenge. Some of the staff fight change tooth and nail.

I've learned so much from interaction with my board.

When I first became president, I made a lot of mistakes and stepped on lots of toes.

Life experiences were also reported as facilitating growth for many of the presidents. Many of the early life experiences centered on successes in school, leadership roles, and family events. Other "experiences" for the presidents involved recollections of expectations from significant others. (This category of people/mentors is analyzed in more depth in response to Research Question 4.) Examples of early life experiences that were reported by the group of presidents as affecting their current professional development are:

I attended a small elementary school with only one teacher. I not only learned from the teacher but also from the other kids.

I was pretty good in athletics in school. I was the "field general" for the basketball team. Other people had more talent, but I kept the group together and got them to believe in themselves and each other.

It was understood from the very beginning that I was going to succeed. I knew I was going to college and beyond very early in life.

Later personal experiences also promoted learning opportunities for a group of the presidents. Several presidents talked about significant losses, successes, and introspective realizations as being triggering events in their lives. Examples of personal experiences that were identified as facilitating growth in the community college presidents are:

I've learned so much about other people and myself from having my own children.

My divorce taught me the importance of being honest with myself and other people.

I moved from a city I really loved and realize more now how important a support group is.

I'm learning a lot about computers. I never thought I would.

Patterns of experiences are described in more depth in answer to Research Question 4. A complete list of all quotations, categorized by type of experience, can be found in Appendix D.

There was certainly variance in terms of the number of experiences identified as being significant in the presidents' professional development. The range of responses was from 2 to 11 reported experiences. All 12 presidents were able to identify at least two work/life experiences that they said affected their own professional development.

Therefore, in response to Research Question 1, it can be stated that the professional development of community college presidents was definitely affected by their professional/work and/or

life/personal experiences. The presidents could recall past experiences, either professional or personal, that they identified as contributing to their growth as leaders within the academic arena.

As a point of summary regarding Research Question 1, the following quotations are cited:

Everyone in life enters the School of Hard Knocks of Experience; however, only the "survivors" graduate.

Each new job I take on teaches me new skills I will use from now on.

The more experiences a person has, the fewer surprises [he/she] will have in life.

Research Question 2

What experiences have the greatest effect on the community college presidents: (a) formal training; (b) informal on-the-job training experiences; or (c) personal life experiences?

To begin to answer this question, the researcher assumed that the frequency of experiences recalled would suggest some degree of importance associated with the three classifications of events identified. Formal training experiences include specific academic programs, seminars, in-service sessions, conferences, institutes, workshops, and other programs offering specific opportunities for knowledge acquisition. Informal, on-the-job training experiences could include being put in charge of a new project, being given progressively more challenging responsibilities in a department or an organization, spending time with peers or supervisors learning about specific job tasks, or interacting with other people either as

an observer (mentor) or reaching out to a co-worker in a support-network fashion. Personal life experiences would include those events occurring outside the workplace that in some way affected the president's leadership style.

The numbers of academic experiences reported by the presidents as having affected their professional development are shown in Table 4.2.

Table 4.2.--Frequency distribution of academic/formal training experiences for the community college presidents.

President	Number of Academic Experiences Reported	Cumulative Frequency
A	1	1
B	2	3
C	2	5
D	2	7
E	2	9
F	1	10
G	3	13
H	1	14
I	0	14
J	1	15
K	1	16
L	1	17

Eleven of the presidents reported a significant event being an academic experience. Five of the presidents were able to identify multiple academic experiences. Those experiences are listed in Table 4.3. The completion of major projects or programs appeared to be a significant experience for several of the presidents. The presidents reported learning much from the content of the courses or

Table 4.3.--Academic experiences of Michigan community college presidents.

[Obtaining a master's degree]--It helps me to better understand the day-to-day functions of the community college.

[Leadership program]--I learned to believe in myself. One professor really helped me a lot.

Doctoral coursework provided me with important challenges and an invaluable theoretical background. (2 respondents)

The dissertation process taught me a lot about myself. I can thank [Professor] for much of that. (2 respondents)

Finishing the Ph.D. bolstered my self-confidence. (2 respondents)

I was seen early in school as a rebel. Later, I was labeled a "late bloomer."

I learned a lot from my time spent as a student at a community college. Of course, I was advised to go there because "community colleges accept anyone."

The training that new community college presidents go through was very helpful. I learned not only specific content but also whom I could call when I had questions.

Being a business major in college has proved to be very helpful.

As a student teacher, I learned how to motivate others.

Being a graduate student gave me an opportunity to learn so much that I still fall back on as a president.

In my undergraduate experience I had gone to a small college where excellence was expected.

Our staff is going through some team-building training, and I think it will help us all greatly.

Ken Blanchard talking about supervision was helpful to me and my staff.

workshops, but they also related an enhanced self-esteem as a result of project completion. Specific instructors or presenters were also identified as being influential.

Another influential set of experiences for the presidents appeared to be the informal, on-the-job training opportunities. Thirty-three events were identified as being important to the professional growth of the president. Table 4.4 provides a frequency distribution for the on-the-job experiences. Of the 33 experiences, 15 (46%) occurred before the participant became president of the current institution. Eighteen (54%) of the events took place after the interviewee took office.

Table 4.4.--Frequency distribution of informal on-the-job training experiences for Michigan community college presidents.

President	On-the-Job Training Experiences		Total Cumulative Frequency
	Before Current Position	As President (Current Position)	
A	1	0	1
B	3	1	5
C	1	4	10
D	0	0	10
E	1	2	13
F	0	1	14
G	0	3	17
H	7	1	25
I	0	1	26
J	1	1	28
K	1	1	30
L	0	3	33
Total	15	18	

Table 4.5.--On-the-job training experiences for community college presidents.

On-the-Job Training in Other Positions (Not Current Presidency)

I worked four part-time jobs and loved it.

I was charged with the task of building a new program from scratch.
(2 respondents)

The role of teacher helped me learn about other people. (2 respondents)

I was a rookie thrown into a situation with an experienced staff.

I worked in an institution that was heavily into control and rules.
(2 respondents)

I worked in a state department of education.

Being vice-president was rewarding because I worked directly with the faculty.

I was in charge of continuing education and the co-op program.

In my previous job, people that made mistakes didn't last. Opportunities arose for the survivors.

It really hurt a lot when a part of my job was taken from me. It didn't matter to me that the reason was because the college was growing too rapidly.

I was depended upon by a president to do his job. I was effective in that role.

I came from a large, progressive school to a smaller institution. I learned a lot about myself from that move.

On-the-Job Training As President (In Current Position)

As the new president, I was given the opportunity to set policy and develop procedures. The Board asked my opinion on what I thought should be done.

I followed a president who had made all the decisions. I wanted to change that procedure quickly, but I was struck by reality that many of the staff were now comfortable with that style and saw my desire for obtaining their input as a means of "rocking the boat." Many of my ideas were not met with open arms!

Table 4.5.--Continued.

I had opportunities to start many new programs and also closing down older programs that were outdated.

I had to learn how to confront employees and teach them to take on more responsibilities.

I needed to hire a few people and quickly learned how to interview and to identify in others the skills I was desiring.

I went through a union negotiation, which taught me a lot about bargaining and how to listen.

I was chewed out by my Board once for taking something to them to work on that I should have done myself. You'd better believe I never made that mistake again!

I am forcing myself to find new ways to help others become prepared for inevitable changes in the organization. People just don't embrace change as I do.

I've had some interactions with the press, which have taught me a lot.

The more I interact with the Board, the more I realize the importance of developing a win-win relationship. It is essential.

Every day I call or talk with another president from around the country finding out how they handled a specific problem or sharing how I interpret a new policy or something. I learn a lot from my peers, and it feels good to be able to ask for help.

Being involved in community programs and serving on boards teaches me a lot about getting information and on how to "test the waters" regarding programs at the community college.

Many of the current projects I'm working on right now offer many learning opportunities. I feel stretched taking on new projects for the college.

I am an advisor for a national conference, and I am learning a lot by sorting through different programs and speakers.

Early in my presidency, I made many mistakes, some successes, too. But I've tried to learn from all those situations.

Table 4.5.--Continued.

I inherited a staff that found change very difficult.

Being on the speaking circuit is really on-the-job training because each topic or group is different. It's a challenge.

I see myself as a change agent. No degree program or course can teach you how to do that. You learn by trying things out, going with gut reactions, and being flexible enough to change if it doesn't work out.

Five of the interviewees stated that academic programs were certainly helpful, especially in setting a general theoretical framework, but that the day-to-day events of the job offer more opportunities for "hands-on learning." Some of the presidents talked about falling back on their basic personality traits when questions arose on how to handle specific situations. The presidents thought that the personality traits were established and developed fairly early in life. Some of the presidents could identify situations/experiences that had affected the development of that personality characteristic. Those personal experiences are the third and final group of experiences analyzed in response to Question 2.

The academic experiences served an important function in enhancing on-the-job experiences. For several of the presidents, however, the personal experiences identified provided a stronger base from which to work. Many of the experiences dealt with school, sports, and the acquisition of leadership skills and being given

greater degrees of responsibility, not only for self but also for others. Other experiences reflected the expectation from others (whether verbalized or not) that the interviewee was good, could succeed at whatever was tried, and would go on and accomplish many life goals. Table 4.6 is a cumulative frequency chart reflecting, by president, the number of personal experiences that were identified as having had some lasting effect on the interviewee.

Table 4.6.--Frequency distribution of personal experiences most affecting the community college presidents.

President	Number of Personal Experiences Reported	Cumulative Frequency
A	2	2
B	1	3
C	4	7
D	9	16
E	4	20
F	2	22
G	6	28
H	2	30
I	3	33
J	0	33
K	0	33
L	8	41

Upon further analysis of the experiences identified, it became apparent that specific patterns of experiences emerged. The four major groups of personal experiences are listed in Table 4.7. Approximately 80% of the personal experiences (33 items) are identified by these patterns. Different kinds of school experiences accounted for the greatest number of events identified, followed by

significant losses experienced over the years. Being recognized in a negative light was perceived as a motivator to overcome. The experience of having children helped the presidents redefine the notion of patience. Other presidents perceived the need to redefine their priority list, and still others thought they had learned much about how to relate to other people through the experience of parenting. (The lessons learned are discussed in more depth in answering Research Question 3.) A complete list of the 41 personal experiences affecting community college presidents can be found in Appendix C.

Table 4.7.--Patterns of personal experiences affecting community college presidents.

Type of Experience Reported	Frequency	% of All Personal Experiences Identified
Losses (death, divorce)	7	17.0%
School (elementary, high school, college)		
Being involved in school activities	5	12.0%
"School/learning was easy"	5	12.0%
Leadership role in school activities	5	12.0%
Benefits/costs of attending small school	3	7.0%
Having children	5	12.0%
Having "negative labels" attached to oneself early in life	3	7.0%
Total	33	79.0% ^a

^aColumn does not add up to 80% due to rounding error.

In summary, all three types of experiences (formal training, informal on-the-job training, and personal life experiences) appeared to have an effect on the group of community college presidents. The self-report interview reflected that the presidents found it easier to identify on-the-job experiences and personal experiences than they did formal training experiences (see Table 4.8).

Table 4.8.--Experiences affecting community college presidents professionally.

Type of Experience	Frequency Reported
Formal training	17
On-the-job training	33
Personal life	41

To answer Research Question 2, therefore, it can be stated that all three types of experiences affected the group of community college presidents interviewed. The interviewees were more likely to recall personal and on-the-job training experiences than they were academic experiences. This, however, does not necessarily mean that personal experiences are most important or meaningful.

The next question focuses on the lessons learned from the events experienced. As a point of transition, a few quotations from the presidents are shared here.

The experience itself does not affect me [the president] in the long run as much as what I learned from that experience.

I see experiences as situations to be handled. I see the lessons learned from experiencing those situations as being the actual development of my life philosophy.

I can talk more easily about my lessons learned because I can't always identify the specific situation I experienced. So much of life is cumulative.

Research Question 3

What lessons were learned from these professional experiences that better prepared these administrators for the job tasks associated with the role of community college president?

For the purpose of this project, the presidents were asked to define a "lesson" as being something that was learned from experiencing some event or situation. The "lessons of experience" are turned into beliefs and values that make up a management philosophy and affect one's decisions and behaviors on a day-to-day basis. Common themes for each group of lessons learned are shared in this section, with quotations offered as examples for each theme. A full list of the lessons learned can be found in Appendix E. The number of presidents who contributed insights for a specific group is indicated, as well as recognition of the total number of lessons identified for that category.

Professional Experience Lessons: Before Current Presidential Position

Four themes emerged from the 38 lessons reported by the 10 presidents in this category. Some presidents made recommendations on how to look at situations and how to maintain a psychological balance in one's life. Other presidents talked about the importance

of taking advantage of situations that arise and what can be gained by being active in the role of president.

Examples of lessons pertaining to looking at life situations include:

It is important to be perceptive and watch other people's reactions.

A person must be able to accept reality before [he/she] is able to make changes.

Try to not treat every incident as a disaster and try to see most disasters as incidents.

Examples of lessons pertaining to keeping a psychological balance include:

Be flexible in life. Learn to bend.

Life is not always fair. No one said it would be.

Don't get too involved in the job.

Examples of lessons that are applicable to taking advantage of opportunities include:

Bloom where you are planted.

Try to find opportunities in every situation you encounter.

Take things as they come.

Examples of lessons pertaining to being an active president include:

Go into a meeting prepared.

We must listen to other people if we intend on getting anywhere.

Open communication is vital for the success of any organization.

Professional Experience Lessons:
During Current Presidency

When analyzing the 42 lessons identified by the nine presidents, four themes emerged. The presidents learned lessons that pertained to motivating others and how to deal with problems. They also talked about how to be a successful leader and the importance of keeping in mind that the president is human.

Examples of lessons pertaining to the president's being human include:

There can be a lot of pain in being president.

I am not always right.

You will not be liked by everyone.

Examples of lessons pertaining to taking care of problems include:

Set priorities.

I want to encourage people to take full ownership of their own problems.

Deal with problems before they become unmanageable.

The following are examples of lessons pertaining to motivating a staff:

Keep no secrets from the staff--especially during negotiations.

People want to get even--give them positives, and they will do likewise.

People will take more risks when they trust their supervisors.

Examples of lessons that describe how to be a successful leader include:

I must live in the present to get things accomplished.

Reduce surprises by walking around and staying informed.

Surround yourself with people who will tell you the truth.

Besides the professional experiences and lessons learned, the presidents also talked about personal experiences and the subsequent lessons learned. These lessons are further analyzed by when the events took place (before the age of 18 or after the age of 18).

Personal Experience Lessons:
Acquired Before Age 18

The 23 reported lessons generated two broad themes that were discussed in this category by eight presidents. The lessons focused on the notions of potential in people, either themselves or others, and a series of suggestions for making the most of one's own life. (A full list of this group of lessons learned appears in Appendix D.)

Examples of lessons focusing on accepting and identifying potential strengths in all people include:

Be inclusive of all kinds of people--accept diversity.

I should respect any power or authority I possess.

We must recognize and accept our own weaknesses and build on our strengths.

The following are examples of lessons pertaining to tips on living:

Look for the positive around you.

I don't treat all people the same.

Be honest with all people, including yourself.

Set goals.

Personal Experience Lessons:
Acquired After Age 18

The 20 reported lessons generated three major themes that were discussed by eight presidents. The lessons reflected beliefs pertaining to the use of time, guidelines for relating to others, and issues in respect to the self. (A full list of the 20 lessons is reported in Appendix D.)

Examples of lessons relating to the treatment of time include the following:

Time is too valuable to waste.

Capture the moment and make the most of it.

You must set goals for yourself if you want to succeed.

The following are examples of lessons pertaining to guidelines for relating to others:

Leave kids alone. Let them grow on their own.

Help other people.

Listen to what people think they can do.

Examples of lessons pertaining to issues in respect to the self include:

I've learned to be very self-disciplined. I enjoy this because I get a lot accomplished this way.

It is important to be autonomous. I depend only on myself.

I know I can improve on myself. I'm sure not perfect.

Lessons Learned From Academic Experiences

Three themes emerged from the 23 lessons reported by 10 presidents in this category. Several presidents thought that learning was a privilege and should be a high priority for others. Other presidents learned that people can relate to others in an attempt to help those individuals grow. Acknowledging one's limitations was not a weakness for some presidents.

The following are examples of lessons pertaining to people skills:

Teach people to make their own decisions. Empower others.

Positive feedback really helps certain people grow.

People skills are so very important.

You must be direct with people to get tasks accomplished.

Examples of lessons pertaining to the gift of learning include the following:

There is no substitute for knowledge. Read all you can.

The president can learn from a subordinate.

Some choices I made earlier in my life might have made sense then, but now they look pretty stupid. Learn from past mistakes and continue making choices.

Examples of lessons that center on acknowledging one's limitations include:

I might question some of my own decisions, but I don't question me.

Be willing to learn about yourself. It is not always fun, but you can really grow.

I now realize I cannot control other people. They will do what they need to do.

I realize that some things in life I cannot change.

I cannot be all things to all people.

To summarize the response to Research Question 3, a variety of lessons were learned by the presidents as a result of having experienced different situations or events. A total of 146 lessons were reported by the presidents as having helped to prepare them for the specific organizational job tasks. The lessons were professional and personal in nature and were further categorized into themes by identifying commonalities shared as a result of the insights of the group. The list of lesson themes appears below.

Lessons Based on Professional Experiences Before Current Presidency

- Looking at life situations
- Keeping a psychological balance
- Taking advantage of opportunities
- Being an active president

Lessons Based on Professional Experiences During Presidency

- The president is human
- Taking care of problems
- Motivating a staff
- How to be a successful leader

Lessons Based on Personal Experiences Before Age 18

- Accepting and identifying the potential in all people
- Tips on living

Lessons Based on Personal Experiences After Age 18

- Time issues
- Guidelines for relating to others
- Issues regarding the self

Lessons Based on Academic Experiences

- People skills
- The gift of learning
- Acknowledging one's limitations

Besides the themes that have already been identified, the issue of major patterns of experiences and lessons learned also emerged. This is the basis for Research Question 4. (Other groups of lessons learned are discussed in more depth after Research Question 5, in the Subsidiary Analysis section of this chapter.)

Research Question 4

Do certain patterns or themes arise pertaining to the kinds of experiences or the lessons learned for the group of presidents sampled?

This question was answered, in part, by the responses to Research Questions 2 and 3. In Question 2, specific groups of experiences were identified, and in Question 3 specific themes of lessons were stated. To answer Research Question 4 more fully, the types of experiences and lessons are categorized and a definition of each pattern found is shared.

Patterns of Experiences

Experiences were defined as situations that affected the leadership style of the community college presidents: specific job tasks; interactions with specific people; hardships; or other

significant periods or transitions (coursework, early jobs, personal experiences, and so on).

Six major categories of experiences evolved, based on the insights and input of the interviewees. The six patterns have been entitled (a) personal experiences up to age 18, (b) personal experiences after age 18, (c) professional experiences before current presidency, (d) professional experiences as president, (e) academic experiences, and (f) experiences involving other people/mentors. Each pattern of experiences is defined in the following paragraphs.

Personal experiences up to age 18. Many of these events focused on upbringing, family traditions or expectations, and early school experiences. Leadership opportunities in sports or social clubs were also subsumed under this category.

Personal experiences after age 18. These experiences focused on change, such as through death of a significant other, divorce, or having children. Participation in social organizations (perhaps a continuation of these social groups started when younger) as well as specific realizations regarding one's own life were examples of experiences that appeared in this group.

Professional experiences before current presidency. These experiences included "first jobs," as well as positions on the career ladder for the president. Job tasks and projects were identified often, as were "start ups" and redefinition of roles within the organization. Early successes and near successes were mentioned, as well.

Professional experiences as president. These experiences included specific job tasks and the identification of new roles (for the new president). Some of the new roles involved cutting programs or starting up new projects. Interacting with different groups of people (community, unions, political figures, and so on), as well as following the predecessor, were often identified.

Academic experiences. These included college degrees earned, as well as specific programs, workshops, and conferences that were attended after completing the high school diploma. Several discussions pertained to completing the doctorate or the actual writing of the dissertation as being significant.

Other people/mentors. This pattern of experiences (which is identified in more depth in the Subsidiary Analysis section) included parents, teachers, college presidents, coaches, spouses, and children. Siblings, peers, and specific friends were also named frequently. Several presidents mentioned that there were very few people from whom they had not learned.

The six categories of experiences provided the presidents an opportunity to describe different lessons learned. The lessons were defined as leadership skills or patterns of thinking acquired as a result of the events experienced. The major patterns of lessons were identified as (a) basic values or beliefs, (b) basic management philosophy, (c) leadership style, and (d) personal awareness. Three of these categories were subdivided into more specific groupings. Basic management philosophy lessons were not further subdivided.

Another group of lessons elicited a series of secondary patterns. The secondary patterns of lessons learned dealt with such topics as dealing with other people, coping with adversity, feedback (giving and receiving), interacting with the Board of Trustees, political lessons, lessons involving community colleges specifically, and the notion of support for the president.

In the following paragraphs, each group of lessons is identified and defined, supporting the notion that patterns of lessons of experiences do exist.

Basic values/beliefs. These lessons involved statements of insight or reflection dealing mostly with concepts related to life and other people. Suggestions were made on how to get the most out of one's life and the importance associated with setting goals and "stretching oneself" psychologically. The interviewees also discussed sayings and phrases that they had learned to help them through the tough times (views of life). Suggestions were also made on how to treat other people.

Basic management philosophy. Specific lessons in this category reflected beliefs respondents depended upon when dealing with professional situations. This group of lessons served as a major "pool of knowledge" to resort to when faced with professional incidents.

Leadership style. This group of lessons involved the behaviors called on from the arena of management philosophy to carry out the action plan. The presidents identified the actions necessary to be perceived as an effective leader, as well as the essential attitudes

endorsed by the presidents. Other presidential insights are included in this category also.

Personal awareness. This group of lessons learned focused on issues of self-growth and self-confidence, identification of strengths and limitations, and suggestions regarding interactions with others. These lessons appeared to relate to many different situations, not just professional development.

Developing your people. These lessons focused on staff development and how the president can encourage individual growth within the organization.

Dealing with others. These lessons provided a general framework from which the presidents could interact with others in a positive fashion.

Coping with adversity. These lessons identified several reactions to the stress response.

Feedback (giving and receiving). This group of lessons included the means by which the presidents sought information about programs, the school's or their own performance, or other lessons that reflected the president's desire and ability to share his/her point of view with someone else.

Lessons involving the Board. These lessons were specific as to what the presidents had learned from interacting with the Board for varying amounts of time. The presidents talked about the relationship with the Board, as well as discussing specific ways of keeping each other informed and promoting trust in the group.

Political lessons. This group of lessons focused on relating to people who were a part of the political system and the importance of enhancing one's awareness of the power structure that exists (at the college, in the community, and around the state).

Specific lessons for the community college. These lessons served the president on a day-to-day basis as he/she dealt with organizational events.

Support. Lessons in this category reflected the importance of networking with other presidents in the state or nationally at conferences or on the telephone.

The patterns of lessons identified are certainly not mutually exclusive but serve as a reminder that patterns of experiences and lessons learned do exist. Appendix D contain lists of the specific lessons learned, based on the categories outlined in Research Question 4.

Research Question 5

If patterns of experiences or lessons learned arise, what effect could these data have for the professional development of prospective leaders in the community college environment?

This question called for interpretation of data and possible outcomes for prospective leaders and is discussed in more depth in Chapter V.

Other data were obtained from the interviews with community college presidents. The next section, Subsidiary Analysis, is used to identify the topics and to share significant data.

Subsidiary Analysis

In this section, additional analyses are introduced, focusing on a major group of experiences identified by the presidents (the role of other people and/or mentors in their lives) as well as a variety of other lessons learned by the presidents, including those lessons that are specific to the process of feedback, the Board, and community colleges. A section is dedicated to the significant learnings as reported by the presidents. The last section in this chapter identifies responses to three other questions asked during the interview process (What has been most "fun" for you in your role as president? How have you changed during your tenure as president? What is next for you after the current presidency?)

Experiences Affecting You in Your Role as President: Other People/Mentors

All 12 presidents identified specific people who had had a significant effect on them as individuals. Some of these people were more influential in the president's personal life (which still affects their professional existence) and are listed by group with examples of lessons learned:

1. Parents: Be honest, work hard, "It's okay," "Life is kind of funny," "Don't take advantage of others."
2. Spouse: Being supportive and outgoing.
3. Children: "I learn a lot from my kids."

4. Teachers: "Must gain other people's respect," modeled kindness, confronted the president by saying, "Get your act together."
5. Clergy: Established high values/beliefs.

Other people were considered more like mentors. The presidents defined a mentor as being "a person with shared values like mine." "A mentor is someone who is an optimistic problem solver." "If our styles of leadership were similar, he/she would probably be a mentor for me."

1. Professors in undergraduate or graduate school: "This person helped me see my potential."
2. Past presidents/predecessors: "I learned how not to be a president by watching _____. "We talked about goals and dreams. He taught me a lot."
3. Supervisors: "I learned how to deal with others by watching _____. "I learned a lot about politics by talking with _____. "I was 'coached' by _____. He supported and groomed me for this position."
4. Specific Board members: "He was always able to keep his cool during tough times." "We share a lot of thoughts, and he helps me stay informed."
5. Peers (current presidents): "They provide a lot of support." "I learn a lot from my peers every day."

People have played a significant role in the life of all the presidents. Several presidents said, "There have been very few people that I haven't learned from." One president said, "It is

important to watch the people you work for and analyze why did what they do work, or not work, and then file that information away mentally."

Experiencing certain people in one's life provided the opportunity for the presidents to learn many lessons involving interpersonal relations as well as insights into self-esteem. Other lessons involved the process of feedback (giving and receiving).

Lessons of Experience: Giving and Receiving Feedback

The feedback process is seen as a communication tool and as a device for motivating people. People learn about their performance through the acquisition of helpful feedback. Many lessons can be learned by experiencing feedback. Also, this researcher was interested in the kind of feedback received by the presidents.

Feedback: sending. The presidents talked about the importance of sending positive feedback often (some reported being weak in this area), as well as being direct and specific with the feedback. Some presidents talked about the importance of gifts, bonuses, and newsletters. Other comments regarding sending feedback were: "Praise in public." "Silence, for me, is truly golden." "I give feedback to people based on their accomplishments, not their goals." "Compliment others often, so we can work closely together."

Besides seeing feedback as a necessity and as something that builds trust, several presidents realized that they did not give enough positive feedback. The presidents saw the feedback process

as being a two-way street. They realized they needed to give feedback, but they also knew the importance of receiving helpful feedback.

Feedback: receiving. Several presidents believed in the importance of hearing from other people "how they are perceived and how the organization is viewed." It was recognized, however, that "as you move down the institutional system the feedback to the president often times becomes softer." Several presidents believed that it is difficult receiving feedback from one's subordinates. The presidents often sought feedback from the Board or the community or from other presidents. Staff meetings, retreats, and walking around the campus provided a variety of opportunities to receive necessary feedback. Other presidents, in talking about receiving feedback, said:

If I look at my own weaknesses, I hope I'm modeling so others will help me see my weaknesses and theirs too.

The feedback I get is often negative. You get the job done but are criticized for how you do the job. It seems that stagnation and inactivity receive less criticism than promoting change.

I have to give myself feedback frequently. I do this through quiet times of reflection and during vacations.

The group of presidents saw a need for receiving feedback so that problems could be corrected and the organization could continue growing. Another way that the presidents thought the community college could grow was through the development and maintenance of positive working relationships with the Board of Trustees. Most

presidents made comments about their relationship with their Board, which are reflected in the following section.

Interactions With the Board

Most presidents talked about the very positive relationship they had with their Board. They also suggested ways to maintain and enhance that positive relationship:

Ask the Board for their support.

Keep the Board informed.

Make sure the Board is accustomed to success.

Be direct and up-front with the Board.

Meet with members of the Board on a regular basis to help reduce surprises.

If there are questions about an up-coming item on the agenda, make sure the board member calls before the meeting. I don't like surprises in Board meetings either.

Provide your Board with lots of TLC.

The kinds of insights the presidents had regarding the Board carried over to specific lessons learned regarding the community college.

Lessons of Experience Regarding Community Colleges

In this category the presidents focused on helping specific student groups and the importance of monitoring the needs of the community. Presidents saw a need to provide new programs to the host community in a timely manner. Other presidents said:

In the beginning of a presidency, spend more time with school activities and get the staff in place.

Try to make dramatic changes early in your tenure on the job.
If you don't, people will think it is just more of the same.

Victories are needed early to raise staff morale.

In addition to being asked about experiences and lessons learned, the participants were asked to identify a "significant learning" (something they would like to pass on to other people). The following section identifies the significant learnings, and a section in Chapter V focuses on the effect of the lessons identified.

Significant Lessons Learned

The list of significant lessons learned is a group of insights, beliefs, and sayings that the presidents use in their lives, both professionally and personally. Table 4.9 provides a complete list of the significant lessons learned.

Table 4.9.--Significant lessons learned by community college presidents.

Empower others. Teach people to make their own decisions. (2 respondents)

We must grow our own future leaders.

Be patient with others. Give them an opportunity to grow into who they can become. (3 respondents)

Praise others regularly.

Let go of problems in the organization so that others can do their own job.

Validate other people's okayness.

Table 4.9.--Continued.

Build on strengths of people.

Demand that others set their own goals.

Respect people.

Realize that people will do what they need to do. You can't control other people.

Differences between people are okay. We must accept others as they are. (2 respondents)

Live in the present moment; the now! (2 respondents)

Try not to treat incidents as disasters; try to see most disasters as incidents.

Choose your battles carefully.

Be an optimist.

Feed the imagination. Have a dream.

Find opportunities in all of life's situations.

Be involved in the world of ideas.

Be open to other possibilities and to new ideas.

Bloom where you are planted. (Make an investment wherever you are.)

Spend your time looking at the future.

Trust people.

I want to do things so my people will look forward to coming to work.

Education is a process, not a destination.

Life is good.

People are either growing or dying physically, intellectually, emotionally, and spiritually.

You don't find yourself. You design yourself.

Choices exist.

Table 4.9.--Continued.

We can't predict the future, but we can shape it.

Life is too short. Don't hold grudges.

You reap what you sow.

You can't please everyone all the time; don't even try.

People are busy, so don't waste their time.

When the staff recognize their own strengths and weaknesses, the president's job is much easier.

There are many ways to do things.

Individuals do make a difference.

We must help others take care of themselves.

Every group should strive toward a team notion. The team must be able to take in new people, and participants must be able to adapt and change roles when necessary.

Keep an emotional balance.

The school will survive without me.

Little things make a big differences to people. (2 respondents)

All people are racehorses. We just have to find out what race they are in.

Manage change. Don't be a victim to it.

Pair the legitimate opportunity up with the natural champion.

Reduce surprises by walking around and keeping others informed.

Face reality.

Listen to people.

Share the organizational vision with others.

Be likable and competent.

Be honest and direct with people.

Table 4.9.--Continued.

Don't take things so seriously.

Be willing to improve on oneself.

Learn from your mistakes.

Learning is a privilege.

Be kind to yourself.

Know thyself.

The next event in life is most exciting to me.

I look forward to each day. New experiences present themselves.

In the final section of this chapter, presidents' responses to three interview questions are presented, with patterns of responses identified and sample quotations offered as examples. A full list of responses, including frequencies, may be found in Appendix E.

The interviewees were asked, What has been most "fun" for you in your role as president? The presidents were inclined to discuss such ideas as witnessing staff growth, seeing the growth of the community college, public relations, walking around the campus, and seeing enrollment increases. The participants believed the role of president is varied and that challenges are ever present. Examples of "presidential fun" responses follow:

Picking people from within the organization who I know will be able to grow and take on additional responsibilities.

Watching people make major contributions to the college.

I enjoy going out and seeking community support for the college.

It is exciting to watch the college grow.

Interviewees were also asked, **How have you changed during your tenure as president?** In response to this question, the presidents identified several sources of change as being significant to them. Some talked about being "wiser," in the sense of knowing what situations to fight for and which ones to let go. Several presidents reported listening more to the people around them. Many talked about knowing their own limits and being able to say "no" much more easily. As a group, they reported being more confident in their decision making. Reaching out to different resources, whether it be other presidents or people who had a skill the president did not have, appeared to be easier now for some presidents. Examples of changes made by the presidents include:

I'm learning the importance of building relationships with the community.

I now have more trust in the people that work for me.

I can sit back and relax more now.

I now realize I can't do it all by Friday.

I'm asking better questions of other people now.

I am more willing to seek resources to fill in for what I can't do.

I don't judge others as much or as quickly.

Finally, presidents were asked, What's next for you after this position? Several presidents admitted to having thought about that exact notion and not having come to any definite answer. A few presidents talked about being too busy with current affairs even to think about the future. Other presidents stated that they know the future holds great things for them. Several participants talked about going back to teaching or possibly getting into business or becoming president of another institution. Some presidents believed they would finish out their career at the current institution, and then they talked freely about their retirement and leisure activities. Examples of responses to "what's next?" include:

I'm not sure and, you know, that's okay for me to not know.

I know something will happen in the future that will take my interest. I'll wait and see and have fun.

I'd like to write a book and teach.

There are too many exciting things happening in the community that I really don't want to even think about leaving.

I might try to become the president of a larger institution.

I'll always be a learner. I'll always read and try to keep up with world events.

Chapter Summary

The findings of the research were presented in this chapter. The research questions were addressed, and results of subsidiary analyses were provided for additional data obtained in the interviews. A summary of the study and discussion of the findings are presented in Chapter V.

CHAPTER V

RESULTS, CONCLUSIONS, DISCUSSION, IMPLICATIONS,
AND REFLECTIONS

Introduction

In this chapter, a summary of the study is made, as are implications and suggestions for future research. A design elaborating on a proposed "preparation program" is also offered. Personal reflections are shared, summarizing the research process and disclosing specific personal insights.

Results

Research Question 1: What effect did work and life experiences have on the professional development of community college presidents?

Work and life experiences were reported by all 12 presidents as affecting their own professional development. Slightly more personal life experiences than professional work experiences were reported as contributing to their growth (personal life--40, professional work--33).

Seven presidents reported events in both domains as contributing to their professional growth. Three presidents identified only professional work experiences, whereas two presidents reported only personal life experiences as facilitating their professional growth.

The work and life experiences enhanced knowledge and understanding in such areas as self-esteem, skill acquisition, and interpersonal relations.

Research Question 2: What experiences had the greatest effect on the community college presidents: (a) formal training; (b) informal on-the-job training experiences; or (c) personal life experiences?

Personal experiences were reported most frequently as having the greatest effect on community college presidents. Informal on-the-job training experiences were reported less frequently than personal experiences but more often than formal academic training experiences for having an effect on the president.

Early personal experiences affecting the president included school activities and having expectations placed on the individual (whether positive, realistic, or not). Major adult personal experiences included experiencing losses and having children.

The presidents identified more on-the-job experiences within their current position as contributing to their growth than those experiences happening in previously held positions.

Research Question 3: What lessons were learned from these professional experiences that better prepared the administrators for the job tasks associated with the role of community college president?

The 146 "lessons" reported by the presidents focused on a wide variety of topics, ranging from specific ideas on how to be an effective administrator to maintaining a psychological balance on the job. Other lessons contributing to the presidents' management philosophy included problem-solving skills, time management,

motivation, being an opportunist, and enhancing interpersonal relations in the workplace. The presidents also identified several lessons that encouraged self-awareness and introspection, as well as acceptance of one's limitations and humanness.

Research Question 4: Did certain patterns or themes arise pertaining to the kinds of experiences or the lessons learned for the group of presidents sampled?

Patterns of Experiences

- Personal experiences
 - Before age 18
 - After age 18
- Professional experiences
 - Before current presidency
 - As president (in current job)
- Formal academic experiences
- Experiences involving other people/mentors

Patterns of Lessons Learned

- Basic values/beliefs
- Basic management philosophy
- Leadership style
- Personal awareness

A secondary pattern of lessons learned emerged, which included themes involving dealing with other people, coping with adversity, interacting with the Board of Trustees, the process of feedback, and the importance of a support network for presidents.

Research Question 5 calls for speculation and application of the research findings and is addressed fully in the implications section of this chapter.

Conclusions

In attempting to answer the research questions, it became apparent that some of the "definitional queries" lent themselves to different degrees of response. It was found that Question 1 was too broad and could only be answered in part, based on the data collected. Questions 2 and 3 were answered satisfactorily and provided the major structure for the entire research study. Research Question 4 presented several problems, most of which revolved around the development of categories and labels for patterns observed. Question 5 provided an opportunity for speculation and future planning of new programs designed to enhance the development of community college leaders.

Based on the findings of this study, the following conclusions have been supported and assist in the understanding of Michigan community college presidents and their professional development.

1. Personal life experiences contribute significantly to the growth and development of Michigan community college presidents.
2. Community college presidents interviewed appear to learn much about their job while serving in the position as chief academic officer.
3. Previously held professional experiences provide "lessons" that presidents use in their current position.

4. Formal academic experiences, while important, contribute less to the professional development of the presidents than do informal on-the-job training experiences and personal events.

5. Presidents learn much from other people. Parents, coaches, and teachers provide many opportunities for learning early in the lives of most presidents. Instructors, spouses, predecessors (in the role of president), and peers (other current presidents) provide stimulation, knowledge, and support for the Michigan community college presidents.

6. All presidents interviewed have specific philosophical beliefs or "significant learnings" that guide their decisions and actions in the workplace.

7. Experiences and people perceived as negatives (promoting pain or discomfort) produce as many lessons learned as do "positive" experiences and people.

8. Different presidents can experience similar events and report having learned different lessons.

9. Most community college presidents can reflect on and identify past experiences that were significant to them. This behavior, however, is not the natural style for all Michigan community college presidents. Some presidents are more inclined to focus on what is going to happen next.

10. Some "lessons learned" cannot be associated with specific events or experiences in the lives of the community college presidents.

Discussion of Results and Conclusions

The results of this study suggest that life experiences do affect the professional development of community college presidents in Michigan. In 1981, Carbone found that experience was a "good teacher" for the group of presidents he studied. Borland, in 1976, stated that the values and beliefs of the presidents he studied were influenced, in part, by the situations they encountered early in life. He noted that people (coaches, professors, and other presidents) and background situations all influenced the group of presidents studied.

In the current study, a more detailed look at experiences identified two major kinds of situations that influenced the community college president. Personal experiences that occurred outside the workplace and professional, on-the-job experiences all affected the research participants. Personal experiences included early relationships with parents and resultant expectations for success. The expectation became internalized by many of the presidents, and they began to expect of themselves what others had expected of them. Sports, clubs, and other people (teachers, coaches, and friends) also influenced the interviewees. Personal experiences as an adult also were reported as being significant in the development of the president. Events such as marriages, having children, and losses (death, divorce, relocation, and children growing up) all provided opportunities for growth and challenge. Often pain was associated with many of these situations.

Professional, on-the-job training situations also enhanced growth and development of the community college presidents. Experiences were recalled that had taken place before the president acquired the current position. Some experiences involved developing programs from scratch, whereas other presidents talked about having job responsibilities taken away as their organizations underwent change and growth. Watching the president who would become predecessor helped the interviewees in deciding whether to maintain the existing leadership pattern or to endorse different degrees of change within the organization.

Situations that occurred while the president was in office also provided opportunities for learning to take place. Fisher (1978) suggested that first-hand experience may be the best way to learn an administrative role. Many situations, including cutting programs, starting new programs, interacting with the union, and working closely with the Board of Trustees, provided opportunities for growth. Some of these same kinds of experiences were discussed by Lindsey et al. (1987) in their study of key events in the lives of executives. They identified four major groups of experiences that influenced the development of business leaders. Developmental assignments included starting projects from scratch, as well as fixing situations when problems arose. Hardships involved business failures and dealing with subordinates' performance problems. The third group consisted of other people who influenced the leader, and the fourth category described other events such as early work experiences and "purely personal" situations. Lindsey et al.

categorized experiences by the type of event encountered. In the current study, events were classified with time being a main denominator (personal experiences before age 18, personal experiences after age 18, professional situations before current position, and professional situations as president).

One major experience that was more likely to take place in the professional-experience arena dealt with the development acquired through interacting with mentors and role models. Lindsey et al. (1987) and Brown (1978) discussed the importance of predecessors, other role models, and social networks. The presidents in this study were also quick to identify people in their lives who had influenced them, either positively or negatively.

People and other events helped presidents learn "lessons" that facilitated their success within the position of chief academic officer. The lessons learned developed into belief systems, which then led to actions and statements of goals, needs, and desires for the different presidents. Lindsey et al. identified 35 categories of lessons, including "dealing with people," "standing alone," "be prepared," "management models," and "how the business works." In the current study, 146 lessons were reported, which were divided into four major themes (basic values, personal awareness, basic management philosophy, and leadership style). Eight additional secondary themes were also identified to enhance the understanding of the acquired data. McCall et al. (1988) identified five clusters of lessons, including setting and implementing agendas, handling

relationships, basic values, executive temperament, and personal awareness. Many of the findings from this study support the research explored in the McCall et al. study.

Many of the lessons learned that were described in this study focused on management philosophy and style of leadership. In addition to McCall et al. and Lindsey et al., another research study that identified specific qualities it takes to run an organization was Bennis and Nanus's (1985) study discussed in Leaders. The authors described "personal qualities of leaders" (persistence, willingness to take risks, accept losses, and having a desire to learn) and "enthusiastic leaders" (being open to new experiences, treating mistakes as opportunities for self-improvement, and being open to advice). The same kinds of qualities were discussed by the presidents in this study. As a group, they talked about the importance of taking risks and having people around them who would be willing to take risks. The presidents also talked about feedback and being persistent with other people. Bennis and Nanus talked about empowerment of others, and several presidents emphasized the importance of helping staff take responsibility for what is theirs and to encourage problem solving at the lowest point in the organization.

The leaders interviewed in the different studies (Bennis & Nanus, Lindsey et al., McCall et al.) described traits that were associated with effective leadership. In the current study, a list of 58 significant lessons learned reflected many of the items identified elsewhere. Many of the significant lessons identified by

the presidents were values, beliefs, or truisms that could serve as anchors to help the president ride out the storm of the stressor on the open seas. The favorite sayings appeared to help the president keep an eye on the desired goal and to find ways to accomplish what was necessary in order to be successful. Many of the significant lessons that the presidents carried with them involved finding ways of helping other people grow and succeed. All of the presidents talked about the importance of finding ways to make their people feel more like "winners." The presidents, as a group, wanted to facilitate growth in others, as well as to continue growing on their own. Most of the presidents craved knowledge and appeared to be self-disciplined when it came to learning (or dealing with problems). One president said it best: "We try not to treat incidents as disasters, and try to see most disasters as incidents."

Most of the presidents knew that they had a significant effect on others, but they balanced this notion with the realization that "the college will survive without me." They appeared to have a fairly healthy sense of self and were willing and able to laugh at life situations or themselves. The presidents interviewed talked about teaching people to make their own decisions and being patient with others. They realized that diversity in others is a strength and that it is important to be involved in the "world of ideas". Many of the presidents described the importance of learning from the past and planning for the future while living the present to the fullest.

Many of the presidents interviewed took risks and admitted to making mistakes. But they were quick to add that they learned from their mistakes (as they learned from watching other people make mistakes). Flach's (1988) notion of the resilient personality echoes much of this attitude by encouraging people to experience life situations which qualify people to deal more with the challenges life provides. One-fourth of the sample interviewed appeared to know how it felt to have to deal with adversity. These individuals had fought off labels or early experiences and became "survivors." Another group of presidents was seen as "succeeders" because they had been expected to succeed and now expected that from themselves.

Some of the significant learnings also suggested that it is important to be optimistic, to look for the good in others, and to look forward to what experiences might occur each day. The presidents also discussed being willing to improve oneself, getting to know oneself, and keeping in balance by being kind to oneself. These points run parallel to the ideas suggested by Michael (cited in Bennis & Nanus, 1985). Michael talked about the "new competence," which involves acknowledging uncertainty, embracing errors, responding to the future, becoming interpersonally competent, and gaining self-knowledge.

Much of the valuable information that has been acquired is not necessarily a part of any pattern but exists on its own merit as a quotation in a list. The individual points, ideas, and experiences

that the presidents shared increased one's understanding of the specific people in the position of chief academic officer.

In summary, the Michigan community college presidents had learned how to grow and develop both professionally and personally. They were equipped early in life with a belief system that included a self-expectation to succeed and an ability to deal with reality, no matter what happened. Most of the presidents set goals and were drawn to the future and what could be. They had learned the importance of treating people fairly and being open, honest, and direct with others. They realized they needed that same directness and honesty from others and went about finding people around them who were able to provide such feedback.

Because most of the presidents lived in the present, they were able to see situations before they became crises and used their problem-solving ability to defuse events on a regular basis. When a problem did occur, they tried to keep it in perspective, using the talents of the people on the staff to resolve the challenge. They, as a group, also learned from the situation, which would enhance their problem-solving skills for the future. Their ability to keep an open mind, combined with a strong need to learn, helped them grow and develop daily. They took risks and used their sense of humor to maintain balance in their lives.

Limitations of the Study

Limitations involving the interview process, self-report procedures, and selective memory were discussed in Chapter I. The

purpose of this section is to offer guidance for researchers who are considering studying a similar population.

The length of the interviews varied from 55 minutes to 2 hours and 40 minutes. It is possible that the longer interviews provided the presidents more opportunity to share greater amounts of data. Responses for the group could be perceived as being skewed in the direction of the presidents who took a longer time with the interviews. The shorter interviews prevented the investigator from asking follow-up questions. The depth of disclosure and richness of response were believed to be affected by the abbreviated interviews (all interviews were supposed to be two hours in length, but not all presidents could donate that amount of time).

Interruptions of the interview process occurred in the majority of sessions. The presidents were able to answer the phones or talk to people at the door, but it is possible that the interviewees then became preoccupied with the other information shared.

The interview questions served as a springboard for the discussion. (The questions were developed based on management-development literature from Lindsey et al., 1987; McCall et al., 1988; and Bennis & Nanus, 1985; and from dissertations by Carbone, 1981; and Borland, 1976). In the time frame of this interview process, the questions appeared to be too broad. More specific questions to help the presidents stay focused could have had a positive effect on the quality of the data collected.

It was expected that the presidents would experience selective perception and not be able to remember every experience or lesson

learned regarding a specific time in their lives. It is believed, however, that an absence of a response does not necessarily mean that no experiences or lessons occurred. Instead, the absence of data signified, simply, that no data were discussed. Sometimes presidents would choose not to respond in great depth because of other factors (time left in the interview, information perceived as being unimportant or seen as too personal). The significance of this study should be weighed on the merits of what was said, not by what was left unspoken.

Some of the limitations identified do not imply weaknesses in the design or data-collection procedures but reflect, instead, specific tendencies associated with self-report interview procedures. It is believed, however, that the richness of the data collected outweighs some of the limitations identified. From the data that were collected, specific implications surfaced, both theoretical and practical. Those implications are discussed next.

Implications for Future Research

Some of the presidents found it easy to identify both experiences and lessons learned. Some presidents appeared to be comfortable in attaching certain lessons to specific situations in their lives. Others, however, had difficulty in combining specific experiences and lessons learned. The question arises: how important is it to have the interviewer try to connect lessons to experiences? It is possible that the lesson itself is the key to future management development, and how the person got there is, perhaps,

not as important. It is also possible that more lessons (or fewer lessons) would have been identified if experiences had not been asked for. Asking for lessons learned first and then asking the participants to identify (as best they could) where (or from whom) they had learned that lesson would perhaps provide different data with which to work.

Some presidents found it difficult to go into the past (where experiences dwell) and identify specific situations. Another possibility would be to focus on the important or significant lessons learned and identify current behaviors that are emitted as a result of holding these beliefs (lessons of experience).

People were identified by each president as being significant to their development. What specifically did these people do? It would be interesting to interview some of the people the presidents identified as mentors. How important did they see their role as being in the professional development of the specific president?

Each president has a special personality, and one's personality affects his/her leadership role. When the president experiences professional development, his/her personality is involved. Assessing community college presidents' personalities and looking for patterns would be interesting. Identifying personality traits as well as experiences and lessons learned would provide more data regarding this specific group. Possible measures for consideration would include Haan's (1977) Ego Development instrument, as well as Shostrom's (1966) Personal Orientation Inventory, which would, in

part, verify where a person spends his/her psychological time (present, future). The Myers-Briggs Type Indicator would provide insight into favorite management styles used by the president. Also, more theoretical consideration could be given, focusing on current stages of development as an adult.

Another dimension of personality concerns the resilient personality. Have community college presidents learned how to be more resilient? How did they learn this coping skill, and are they aware that they use that healthy coping process? It would be interesting to focus on stressors of the presidents and to identify their styles of responding. Do presidents of long tenure cope differently from a group of people who were presidents for only a short time? How do the presidents experience the bifurcation points discussed by Flach (1988)? If patterns exist, this information could be helpful for identifying people at different levels within the organization who would probably cope in an effective way when stressed. Having the presidents identify "high peaks" and "low valleys" in their lives and then asking them to talk about the experiences and their reactions to the situations would be informative. A lifeline chart filled in by the president and then verbal discussion of the main points would provide more information on the coping process. (More negative events would be discussed than what appeared in the current study.)

It would be helpful to define further the experiences by encouraging the presidents not to just state that, for example, "being a teacher was a significant experience," but, in addition, to

discuss what contributed to that event's being a significant experience. This emphasis could help in the research involved in better understanding the career ladders of presidents.

It is suggested that research be broadened to encompass community college presidents from around the country. When a larger national sample is taken, more specific trends and patterns can be identified by size of school, length of tenure, gender, and racial identification. Similarities and differences could be identified for individual presidents as well as groups of presidents.

It appears that community college presidents are beginning to feel overwhelmed by requests to be studied. Several presidents talked about throwing away letters of introduction and inquiry for research because they did not think they had the time. This shift in priorities will make it more of a challenge to acquire the support of the community college president population. It is possible that other groups will have to be sampled and analyzed if the presidents find themselves overwhelmed with requests to participate in specific studies. One such group that could help others understand the community college situation would be prospective leaders in the community college movement. At this point, Research Question 5 will be restated and answered.

Research Question 5: If patterns of experiences or lessons learned arise, what effect could these data have for the professional development of prospective leaders in the community college environment?

Patterns of experiences and lessons learned were identified. The identified patterns could be used in conjunction with the data

from career ladder studies, and more in-depth understanding of future leaders could be gained. Besides knowing that the person was a dean, for example, information could be acquired on what he/she learned while being in that position. That information would help reduce the likelihood of having to assume that, since the candidate was a "dean," certain skills had been acquired.

Much on-the-job training is informal. Future leaders could be given some guidelines on how they can learn from others, from specific projects, and from other people. A class could be offered to academic leaders, in which they learn how to structure situations to enhance their knowledge base. Support groups for the potential chief academic officers could be developed, and research could be conducted on this population of potential leaders, perhaps in a more longitudinal manner. The support groups (perhaps led by a community college president) could provide opportunities for open and frank discussions and be a training ground for problem-solving skills and interpersonal relations.

A forum could also be developed for the current presidents, with the main topic revolving around "major learnings in the year ____." The group of presidents could prepare papers and present some of the information to their peers and other academic leaders. The contents of the conference would be worthy of study, which could lead to other new topics for future research. The conference might also provide some of the presidents an opportunity for a brief respite (an opportunity to establish a balance in one's life).

Presidents could also be charged with the task of identifying potential leaders in their organizations and then making sure that these people are provided with tasks and experiences that would facilitate the acquisition of specific "lessons" needed for providing the background for the future community college president.

If certain lessons were identified as being prerequisites for future development, emphasis could be placed on the acquisition of that information by individuals in leadership roles.

At this point, however, it should be stated that the results of this study suggest that there is no one right path to the position of community college president. Many different experiences provided a wide variety of lessons which, when combined, fostered the development of the community college president. It is possible that informal training designed to help the future leader develop a stronger self-esteem and to want to encourage honest discussion, for example, would meet with greater levels of success.

It is also possible that, based on the findings from this investigation, a program of study could be devised that would foster professional development. Characteristics of such a program are discussed next.

A proposed model of a program designed to prepare future leaders, psychologically, for the role of community college president would include (but not be limited to) the following topics:

1. Endorsing the notion that time needs to be allocated, on a regular basis, for self-reflection. These retrospective mental

inventories would aid the leader in "staying on course" as he/she "plots a passage" for his/her own professional development through the attainment of specific goals.

2. Future leaders will be given opportunities to realize the importance of the "process" during the time of the transition, not just of reaching the destination or end.

3. Participants in this program will wrestle with the realization of their own humanness. They will identify personal limitations and strengths and specifically focus on the enhancement of their strengths. It is also possible that by accepting one's own limitations, new resources will be discovered. The process of accepting "what is" can reflect a striving toward an accurate perception of the self. Even though this accurate perception can sometimes evoke pain, it also can lead to healthy adaptation. Vaillant (1977) suggested that "successful adaptation leaves the way open for future growth" (p. 27).

4. Studies could be developed to encourage leaders to: (a) take healthy risks instead of being safe psychologically; (b) look at reality instead of focusing only on hopes and wishes; (c) cope with life situations and be open to new "adventures" instead of defending and "closing down" mentally by protecting oneself; (d) trust others instead of mistrusting; and (e) be honest with self and others instead of deceiving or denying that which is. (Many of these ideas are similar in content to the notions discussed by Kobasa [1979] regarding psychological hardiness.)

5. A leadership-development program could also emphasize the six general features associated with mental health that Jahoda (1959) discussed, which support the findings from this study. The six themes are, to be: (a) in touch with one's own identity and feelings; (b) future-oriented; (c) resistant to stress; (d) autonomous and aware of one's own needs; (e) perceptive of reality; and (f) able to work, love, and play.

6. Finally, a preparatory program focusing on healthy psychological attributes of community college presidents would encourage the use of different adaptive ego mechanisms, such as: (a) anticipation--"realistic anticipation of future inner discomfort"; (b) altruism--"getting pleasure from giving to others what one would like to receive"; (c) humor--overt expression of ideas and feelings without discomfort for self or unpleasant effects on others; and (d) suppression--"postpone paying attention to a conscious impulse of conflict." Look for the "silver-linings" (mostly taken from Vaillant, 1977, p. 386).

Reflections

I would like to take advantage of this opportunity to share some of my thoughts about this research study, the population sampled, and the results obtained. I am grateful to the presidents who allowed me to get into their worlds for a brief period. They responded in a timely manner and treated me as an equal or peer. I realize how busy they are and how precious their time is. They somehow found time for the interview.

If time had permitted, I would have liked to invite all the presidents to participate in the study. I am curious how many presidents would have agreed to be interviewed. I would have liked to interview more of the "first generation" presidents as they are preparing for retirement. Also, with a larger sample, I would have been in a better position to compare groups (by school size, and so on) more effectively.

The data-analysis process was frustrating because of the categorizing of experiences and lessons, and the fact that clear, distinct categories did not always emerge. I wondered, at times, if I was saying the same thing only in a slightly different way.

In my opinion, the two most important findings from the study involve the significant lessons learned and the notion that since life is a culmination of experiences, a person cannot always clearly identify the event that facilitated the development of a particular lesson. I found it informative to listen to the presidents talk about their significant learnings. A whole segment on management philosophy, leadership skills, and interpersonal relations emerged.

The discussion on significant lessons learned reaffirmed the notion that on-the-job training is very important. Adult learning practices need to be emphasized more in business and industry so more learning can take place because of the people in organizations, not in spite of them. Many people (mentors) could be even more effective if their roles were legitimized within the organization. (If people knew they were expected to train others, maybe they would do a better job of training people.)

Face-to-face interviews were more rewarding for me than were telephone contacts. I had a chance to see most of the presidents on their "home turf," where they felt most comfortable. I was able to learn much about a person by observing the decoration of his/her office.

I believe most of the presidents enjoyed the interview, and several reported that they learned about themselves because of the interaction. Several of the participants expressed interest in receiving a summary of the results.

The study was an important experience for me because of the opportunity I had to meet the people, listen to a part of their life histories, and acquire insights into their management philosophies. I enjoyed meeting the presidents' staffs and having the chance to learn more about the communities and the school climate that existed within the organization.

It was interesting to talk with the presidents and to find out what they looked for in others (what they needed in others to help them succeed).

Finally, I was glad I was able to secure the interviews with the members of this population. They treated me with kindness and respect. The content of the interviews will remain with me for a long time. I would like to go back to the participants in five or ten years and see how they would respond to the same set of questions. I am certain the answers would change, especially regarding the "lessons learned."

APPENDICES

APPENDIX A

INTRODUCTION TO THE STUDY CONTACT

INTRODUCTION TO THE STUDY BY TELEPHONE CONTACT
DONE BY A FACULTY MEMBER

INTRODUCTION: Hello, my name is _____. I am a faculty member at Michigan State University, and I am calling on behalf of one of my doctoral candidates, Lewis Dotterer. He has designed a research study that might be of interest to you.

GOAL OF CONVERSATION: I would like to take a few minutes of your time to explain the process and see if you might have an interest in volunteering your time to participate in the study.

CHOICE OF PRESIDENT: At this point, the president would have total control and be able to say, "Yes I'll listen," or "No, I'm not interested." Depending upon the response, the faculty member would respond positively and either go ahead and explain the study or say, "Thank you for your time, good-bye." No attempt would be made to try to change the mind of any of the presidents (if they say they are too busy to participate, I believe they are too busy to participate).

EXPLANATION OF THE STUDY: If the answer is "Yes," the following would be explained. This is a study that deals with creative leadership and focuses on the population of Michigan community college presidents. Lewis is interested in studying the different kinds of nonacademic significant events/experiences that you feel have had the most effect on you--the community college president. He is also interested in what you feel you learned from those experiences. The means of data collection for this study will be done through an informal interview process. He is interested solely in your perceptions/reflections of your past experiences.

CONFIDENTIALITY/CONTROL: I want you to know that Lewis has seriously taken into consideration the notions of confidentiality and choice/control over the interview process. The interviews are totally confidential. Neither the president's name nor the name of the institution will be used in conjunction with any specific quotation described in the dissertation. No one else besides the researcher will have access to the tapes or notes taken during the interview.

It is also important for Lewis that the participants feel that this process is totally voluntary. He wants to make sure you feel no coercion to participate and that you also have control during the interview process. Even though Lewis will be asking the questions (which you will receive at least one week prior to the interview), you will have every right to decline answering any of the questions; request that the tape recorder be turned off; or, if necessary, request that the interview be terminated immediately. No questions will be asked, and your request will be honored. No "harm" will come

to you if you make such a choice. (Because of the nature of the research, however, your full cooperation is certainly requested.)

QUESTIONS: Do you understand the notions of confidentiality and choice/control? Do you have any questions regarding any component of the study? Does the project sound like something you would be willing to volunteer two hours of your time toward for an interview? (If yes): I will then give your name and telephone number of Lewis Dotterer, who will call you at your convenience to answer any questions you may have and then schedule an interview time, also at your convenience.

Thank you for your time and consideration of this research. Good-bye.

APPENDIX B

CORRESPONDENCE

Date

Dear _____,

I am writing to you today as a follow-up to our phone conversation on _____. I really appreciate your willingness to participate in my study investigating the relationship between creative leadership and community college presidents. I am looking forward to our time together during the interview process, which has been scheduled for _____. I am certain that I will learn much from this interaction.

Enclosed, please find a list of questions we will use as a "spring-board" for our discussion. Follow-up questions will also be utilized, when appropriate, in an attempt to collect as much data as possible.

As was stated during our phone contact, the interviews will be treated in a professional and confidential manner. (Quotations will not be identified with a person or a school when discussed in the dissertation. Also, this researcher will be the only person to have access to tapes and written notes acquired during the interview.) The interview will be tape recorded, with your permission, to ensure that all of the data made available to this researcher are captured for future reference. (If, however, you feel uncomfortable with the recorder on, it will be turned off.) Also, you may choose not to answer any question asked of you. You can also choose to end the interview at any point you feel the need. Your decision to end the interview will therefore be honored.

Thank you again for your full participation in this study. If a problem should arise as to our scheduled appointment, please contact me at your earliest convenience (phone numbers: work 517/371-2006; home 517/339-9086).

I am looking forward to our meeting in the very near future.

Sincerely,

Lewis L. Dotterer

enclosure

Date

Date _____,

The data for the study involving past experiences and lessons learned for the Michigan community college presidents is currently being collected and will be analyzed and interpreted in early March of 1989.

I wanted to take this opportunity to thank you for your support of and participation in this research study. Your honest, direct, and thoughtful responses added much to the richness of the data collected. I learned a great deal from our time together and thoroughly enjoyed the interview.

I hope you felt that it was "worth it" to go through the process. If the interview triggered any other thoughts for you, please feel free to contact me at your convenience. I would be happy to "lend an ear" to you. Also, when I have compiled the data for the dissertation, I plan to send you a copy of the summary of the findings as a way to thank you for your time and thoughtfulness.

I will always think that you contributed much to this study because you gave of yourself.

Thank you very much.

Sincerely,

Lewis L. Dotterer

APPENDIX C

RESPONSES TO INTERVIEW QUESTIONS REGARDING TYPE OF EXPERIENCE

RESPONSES TO INTERVIEW QUESTIONS REGARDING TYPE OF EXPERIENCE

On-the-job training in other positions (not current presidency)

I worked four part-time jobs and loved it.

I was charged with the task of building a new program from scratch [2 responses].

The role of teacher helped me learn about other people [2 responses].

I was a rookie thrown into a situation with an experienced staff.

I worked in an institution that was heavily into control and rules [2 responses].

I worked in a state department of education.

Being vice-president was rewarding because I worked directly with the faculty.

I was in charge of continuing education and the co-op program.

In my previous job, people that made mistakes didn't last. Opportunities arose for the survivors.

It really hurt a lot when a part of my job was taken from me. It didn't matter to me that the reason was because the college was growing too rapidly.

I was depended upon by a president to do his job. I was effective in that role.

I came from a large, progressive school to a smaller institution. I learned a lot about myself from that move.

On-the-job training: As president (in current position)

As the new president, I was given the opportunity to set policy and develop procedures. The Board asked my opinion on what I thought should be done.

I followed a president who had made all the decisions. I wanted to change that procedure quickly, but I was struck by reality that many of the staff were now comfortable with that style and saw my desire for obtaining their input as a means of "rocking the boat."

Many of my ideas were not met with open arms!

I had opportunities to start many new programs and also closing down older programs that were outdated.

I had to learn how to confront employees and teach them to take on more responsibilities.

I needed to hire a few people and quickly learned how to interview and to identify in others the skills I was desiring.

I went through a union negotiation which taught me a lot about bargaining and how to listen.

I was chewed out by my Board once for taking something to them to work on that I should have done myself. You better believe I never made that mistake again!

I am forcing myself to find new ways to help others become prepared for inevitable changes in the organization. People just don't embrace change as I do.

I've had some interactions with the press, which has taught me a lot.

The more I interact with the Board, the more I realize the importance of developing a win-win relationship. It is essential.

Every day I call or talk with another president from around the country, finding out how they handled a specific problem or sharing how I interpret a new policy or something. I learn a lot from my peers, and it feels good to be able to ask for help.

Being involved in community programs and serving on Boards teaches me a lot about getting information and on how to "test the waters" regarding programs at the community college.

Many of the current projects I'm working on right now offer many learning opportunities. I feel stretched taking on new projects for the college.

I am an advisor for a national conference and I am learning a lot by sorting through different programs and speakers.

Early in my presidency, I made many mistakes. Some successes, too, but I've tried to learn from all those situations.

I inherited a staff that found change very difficult.

Being on the speaking circuit is really on-the-job training because each topic or group is different. It's a challenge.

I see myself as a change agent. No degree program or course can teach you how to do that. You learn by trying things out, going with gut reactions, and being flexible enough to change if it doesn't work out.

Personal Experiences Affecting Community College Presidents (Before Age 18)

I attended a small elementary school [2 responses].

I was good in sports [3 responses].

School was easy for me [3 responses].

I was expected to lead others--they were usually younger than me [2 responses].

I felt like an outsider. I was not part of the mainstream.

I was active in high school [3 responses].

I was called a "late bloomer."

I grew up in a rural area. Neighbors depended on each other [2 responses].

My parents were working-class people [2 responses].

My birth order played a part in my upbringing.

Not having both parents in the home had an effect on me.

I took on responsibilities early in life. I was taught to stretch myself.

Personal experiences after age 18

Having children was an exciting time for me [3 responses].

A divorce is a painful experience. I learned a lot [3 responses].

I was a leader in college activities [2 responses].

I was seen as a rebel in college.

I moved from a city I really loved.

[Realization]: I've lived longer than I will live.

I have experienced some isolation in life. It's not all bad.

I changed jobs on a regular basis.

[Realization]: My children are growing up without my input.

I make sure I take my vacations to restore myself.

I was a good student in college.

I volunteered for community projects.

When my parents died, I lost a lot.

Getting involved in a leadership position in a social organization.

Academic Experiences

[Obtaining a master's degree]: It helps me to better understand the day-to-day functions of the community college.

[Leadership program]: I learned to believe in myself. One professor really helped me a lot.

Doctoral coursework provided me with important challenges and an invaluable theoretical background [2 responses].

The dissertation process taught me a lot about myself. I can thank [professor] for much of that [2 responses].

Finishing the Ph.D. bolstered my self-confidence [2 responses].

I was seen early in school as a rebel. Later, I was labeled a "late bloomer."

I learned a lot from my time spent as a student at a community college. Of course, I was advised to go there because "community colleges accept anyone."

The training that new community college presidents go through was very helpful. I learned not only specific content but also whom I could call when I had questions.

Being a business major in college has proved to be very helpful.

As a student teacher, I learned how to motivate others.

Being a graduate student gave me an opportunity to learn so much that I still fall back on as a president.

In my undergraduate experience I had gone to a small college where excellence was expected.

Our staff is going through some team-building training, and I think it will help us all greatly.

Ken Blanchard talking about supervision was helpful to me and my staff.

APPENDIX D

RESPONSES TO INTERVIEW QUESTIONS REGARDING LESSONS LEARNED

RESPONSES TO INTERVIEW QUESTIONS REGARDING LESSONS LEARNED

Lessons Learned Based on Professional Experiences Encountered Before Accepting the Current Presidential Position

Ten presidents identified the following 38 items in this category.

I learned to make decisions quickly.

I learned my direct leadership style while working in another position.

We don't have time to feed problems--we just have enough time to nurture solutions.

I must have risk takers around me for the organization to prosper.

Communication between departments is vital.

We must look at reality.

It is important to be perceptive and watch other people's reactions.

A person must be able to accept reality before [he/she is] able to make changes.

Be flexible in life. Learn to bend.

Bureaucracies are there for a purpose. We must learn to work with them.

There are many ways to do things.

Tell a person the end goal--how they get there is up to them.

Be more interactive and less autocratic.

We have to work hard at getting honest human interactions with subordinates.

Go into a meeting prepared.

We must listen to other people if we intend on getting anywhere.

Be consistent with people.

There is harshness in the world.

Life is not always fair. No one said it would be.

A person has to feel good about him/herself to be able to relate well to others.

Be able to delegate job tasks.

We must trust other people--give them room to succeed.

The needs of the community are the driving force of the community college.

Try to not treat every incident as a disaster and try to see most disasters as incidents.

Don't get too involved in the job.

Change is important and exciting and necessary for self-growth as well as organizational growth.

Try to find opportunities in every situation you encounter.

People skills are vital--most successful people are likable.

Bloom where you are planted.

Give other people the credit for solutions, when possible.

Ask people questions instead of telling them what to do.

Enjoy yourself as you experience life's journey.

Take things as they come.

The president must do the job; whatever needs to be done.

Treat all people equally.

Open communication is vital for the success of any organization.

To accomplish goals, hold self and others accountable.

I need people on my staff who are competent and loyal to me and the organization.

Lessons Learned Based on Professional Experiences Encountered During the Current Presidency

Nine presidents identified the following 42 items.

I am not always right.

I want to encourage people to take full ownership of their own problems.

Some people will question any decision made by the president.

Other people's style of leadership must be consistent with that of the president.

The president must be willing to use hindsight to learn.

My staff must be responsible enough to take risks and make their own decisions. If I have to make their decisions for them, why do I need them on my staff?

Longevity on my staff means a higher standard of work performance.

Don't panic--this situation will work out.

Keep no secrets from staff, especially during negotiations.

People want to get even--give them positives and they will do likewise.

Protect your committees. Don't ask them to make decisions the president should make.

The president's job is to help people reach their goals.

Good things happen when you allow them to happen.

People will take more risks when they trust their supervisors.

Realize the importance of a good secretary.

You will not be liked by everyone.

Set priorities.

The college will survive without me.

I must learn my own limits.

Little things make a big difference to people.

I have to get other people's input.

Be perceptive when around people--some problems can be avoided this way.

Deal with problems before they become unmanageable.

I must minimize my weaknesses.

I've learned to keep my ego out of the presidency.

Get people involved in some project.

I must live in the present to get things accomplished.

Not everyone is on the cutting edge of change.

Some days I can't please anyone.

Learn to live with success and failure.

Maintain empathy toward others.

There can be a lot of pain in being president.

Be wise in choosing one's battles.

Be selective in one's career moves.

Keep your Board aware.

I must own my own mistakes.

Try to make dramatic changes early in your tenure as president.

Surround yourself with people who will tell you the truth.

Take one step at a time regarding your career ladder. Don't miss too many rungs on your ladder, or people won't respect you.

To do long-range planning, put it on the calendar, meet with other people, and do it.

Develop your social network--make sure other people know what you are good at.

Reduce surprises by walking around and staying informed.

Lessons learned based on personal experiences before the age of 18

Eight presidents identified the following 23 items.

I should always do my best.

Everyone makes a difference [2 responses].

To succeed, I need to gain people's respect.

Look for the positive around you.

I don't treat all people the same.

Deal with problems quickly.

Be inclusive of all kinds of people--accept diversity.

I learned that I can make a difference.

I should respect any power or authority I possess.

I'm a survivor--I've made it through some tough times.

We all make mistakes--let's learn from them.

All people have potential.

Let people lead their own lives.

We must recognize and accept our own weaknesses and build on our strengths [2 responses].

I know how to be a good follower.

Be honest with all people, including yourself [2 responses].

We can learn from anybody.

Live life to the fullest. Live now!

Set goals.

Be responsible.

Lessons learned based on personal experiences occurring after age 18

Eight presidents identified the following 20 lessons.

I've learned to be very self-disciplined. I enjoy this because I get a lot accomplished this way.

Time is too valuable to waste.

It is important to be autonomous--I depend only on myself.

I am learning to be patient with people.

I know I can improve on myself. I'm sure not perfect.

Everyone has a right to their own opinion.

I've learned how to interact with others without playing games.

Use humor in life situations.

Leave kids alone--let them grow on their own.

People make choices--there is no room for blaming.

Capture the moment and make the most of it.

Help other people.

I need other people around me who can shore up my weaknesses.

Be kind to yourself and then to others.

You must set goals for yourself if you want to succeed.

Find ways to balance your own life [2 responses].

Listen to what people think they can do.

I have just recently learned what it means to be free.

Be honest with yourself and with others

Lessons learned from academic experiences

Ten presidents identified the following 23 lessons.

There is no substitute for knowledge--read all you can.

Teach people to make their own decisions. Empower others.

The president can learn from a subordinate.

People's time is valuable. Don't waste time.

I might question some of my own decisions, but I don't question me.

I now realize I cannot control other people. They will do what they need to do.

I've learned that I'm a good person.

Be willing to learn about yourself--it is not always fun, but you can really grow.

Feed the imagination. Reach towards your dreams.

I'm smart. I can accomplish anything I desire.

Some choices I made earlier in life might have made sense then, but they look pretty stupid now. Learn from past mistakes and continue making choices.

Sometimes we have to jump through hoops to get to where we are going.

Live in the present moment.

I realize that some things in life I cannot change.

Positive feedback really helps certain people grow.

I cannot be all things to all people.

I learned about a lot of specific administrative responsibilities while finishing the doctorate.

Accept your own strengths and weaknesses and those of others.

People skills are so very important.

You must be direct with people to get tasks accomplished.

In school I learned how to balance several projects simultaneously.

Deal with problems when they arise. They seldom get better on their own.

When running a group, focus on the needs of the majority. Don't ignore the small group, but spend the precious time on the major problems.

APPENDIX E

RESPONSES TO THREE INTERVIEW QUESTIONS: WHAT HAS
BEEN MOST FUN FOR YOU IN YOUR ROLE AS PRESIDENT?
HOW HAVE YOU CHANGED DURING YOUR TENURE AS
PRESIDENT? AND WHAT'S NEXT?

RESPONSES TO THREE INTERVIEW QUESTIONS

What has been most fun for you in your role as president?

Picking people from within the organization who I know can grow and take on additional responsibilities. I enjoy watching people blossom [6 responses].

I like watching people make major contributions to the college [4 responses].

I enjoy watching others be creative in the workplace.

I have fun seeking community support for the college [3 responses].

I like to go out and seek professional acquaintances for my support group [2 responses].

I enjoy teaching seminars.

I feel good when I can mentor others.

I like to surround myself with people who are on a career ladder. They challenge me.

I enjoy the freedom I have to do what I want to do.

I like to walk around and get to know our staff [3 responses].

Watching the community college grow is fun [4 responses].

It is rewarding to have companies reach out to the community college because we do a good job responding to their needs.

There is a great diversity of job tasks.

I like to see people visiting the school.

I feel I can make a difference. I like that.

I'll talk about the college with anyone that will listen.

I like to help shape ideas and then watch them take a form [2 responses].

I love to interact with people because they help me grow.

The students are fun to talk to.

We are seeing the growth of the team at our school.

Retention rate increasing is a reward.

I enjoy being in the leadership spotlight [2 responses].

I like to test my own limits. I like to see how high I can go. I also like to test the limits of my staff--stretch them.

Around every corner is a new experience. I will learn something every day.

How have you changed during your tenure as president?

I have learned how important it is to build strong relationships with the community.

I've learned to let go of things.

I let other people take care of their own problems.

Some things are out of my control. That's okay.

I'm not as involved with the students as I used to be.

I trust people more now [2 responses].

I am learning to sit back and relax more [4 responses].

I am more competent as president.

I am much wiser about the process of how to make decisions.

I know my limits better now [3 responses].

I have more patience with others.

I'm asking better questions of others.

I reach out to others more now.

I understand myself better.

I seek resources more now to help fill in for what I can't do.

I am working hard at maintaining a balance within myself.

I now believe: There will always be problems, but the world won't end because of them.

I take one day at a time.

People will do well. I can't make them do well.

I'm giving more positive feedback than ever before.

Easier to say "No" to others.

I see more of my own strengths. I am more self-confident.

I am more comfortable with my colleagues.

I understand the specific job tasks better re: negotiations, budgets, planning, legislative, and community relations.

I have very little free time. Right now, that is okay because I enjoy my work so much.

I'm doing more fund raising.

I am softer in how I interact with others.

I'm wiser. It is hard being a sage when you are young.

I pay more attention to life.

I have more empathy for others.

I'm not so quick to judge others.

I believe that my best years are still ahead of me.

What's next?

I'm not sure. That's okay [4 responses].

I'm too busy today to look ahead to tomorrow.

I'll continue to try to get more winners at this organization.

I'll keep taking risks. In other words, I'll continue being myself and be honest and direct. I'd move on if I needed to.

I'd like to teach at a university [5 responses].

I might go into business.

Maybe another presidency, but at a larger institution [3 responses].

Possible retirement.

I'm afraid of becoming a one-dimensional president. I need to continue taking vacations, having think times, and making sure I have friendships outside the academic arena.

I know something will happen in the future that will take my interest. I'll wait and see and have fun [2 responses].

I'll focus more on the "inner me."

I'm going to write a book.

There are so many exciting things happening in the community that I really don't want to leave.

More leisure activities.

I want to put things in a better perspective for myself.

More fund-raising activities. More contact with the community.

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