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Stuck in the middle: A case study of conflict experiences by a first-time community college president

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STUCK IN THE MIDDLE: A CASE STUDY OF CONFLICT EXPERIENCES BY

A FIRST-TIME COMMUNITY COLLEGE PRESIDENT

BY

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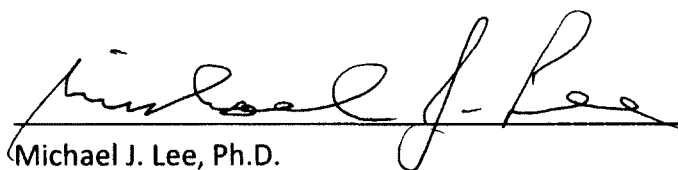
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DEDICATION

To David ... To Marilyn
Always there when it counted

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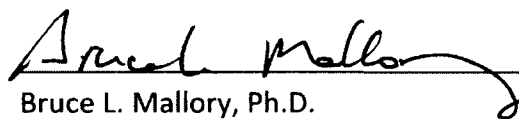My dissertation committee has been, simply put, quite extraordinary in their generosity of time, intellect and spirit. Prof. Nodie Oja, my committee chair, patiently guided me through the wonders and intricacies of adult development stage complexity theory as well guiding the overall project through to a timely completion. Prof. Barbara Houston provided conceptual ballast–keeping me centered and focused in my reasoning, encouraging me to explore the implications of my theories more deeply and patiently reading through my attempts that sometimes ran amok. She also reminded me to "breathe" when I doubted my ability to tackle the project. Prof. Bruce Mallory served as

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My parents Dr. Morris and Marian Paddick were models for me, and wonderful complements to one another. My father taught me to always question "what is" as well as "what might be," while my mother, who had a professional career in addition to her role as wife and mother, taught me that perseverance goes hand in hand with great endeavors. I have also been blessed with three remarkable sisters. In birth order, my oldest sister Margaret Lake, as one of a handful of women computer scientists with NASA in the 1960s lunar explorations, showed us that women need not accept boundaries set by others. Marilyn Clemins, born only 22 months before me, has been not only an older sister, but a pal, a buddy who has demonstrated an extraordinary breath of talents as science educator, speechwriter, landscape designer, entrepreneur and champion for women in the military. She always found time for me including offering valuable editorial advice to improve this dissertation. My younger sister Michele Dill, who died July 1, 2011, always reminded me that life is short so make it count. I send her a loving posthumous thank you for her grace, wit and wicked sense of humor.

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ABSTRACT

STUCK IN THE MIDDLE: A CASE STUDY OF CONFLICT EXPERIENCES BY A FIRST-TIME COMMUNITY COLLEGE PRESIDENT

by

Martha Parker-Magagna

University of New Hampshire, September, 2012

Leadership models for community college presidents are in a major transformation from traditional hierarchical, positional authority to participatory models of decision making. As leadership becomes more participatory, and educators experiment with more team and collaborative approaches to leadership, increased conflict is a likely outcome. Inclusiveness often brings diverse voices into decision making, and empowerment of a variety of individuals brings a shift in traditional power dynamics. Different interests may create conflict, and leaders will need to find ways to negotiate these differences in order to enhance creative adaptation of a community college to its changing environment.

This study explores the experiences and responses to conflict of a community college president using a field case study method and grounded theory approach. Interviews were conducted with the president over 10 months, triangulated with faculty and staff interviews, onsite observations, document analysis and the results of the Leadership Development Profile questionnaire which was developed by William Torbert to predict a leader's stage of social cognitive development (ego maturity).

The results of this study suggest that presidential responses to conflict negatively impacted the organization through habitual avoidance of conflict tensions including disengagement from important and clarifying discussions with the faculty and staff and retreat into bureaucratic routines that kept him separated from faculty interaction. In addition, the results of the Leadership Development Profile suggest a relationship between the president's experiences of conflict and his suggested stage of ego maturity which in turn influenced his choice of conflict responses.

The implications of this study are that conflict engagement choices of this president can best be understood (a) as part of the organizational and environmental context and the developmental capacity (ego maturity) of a leader, (b) problem solving and decision making through collaboration require leaders to continually learn on the job, (c) complex, ambiguous problems may require conflict as a catalyst to surface and challenge assumptions that hinder the search for novel solutions.

Anyone who reaches the top will very likely have had to deal with conflict on the way up. Understand that as president you must deal with conflict, and that conflict creates tension. But tension is not necessarily bad. Often it can be used in positive ways. Resolving conflicts and using tension in positive ways can help you deal with suspicion and build trust, lessons that presidents should learn early in their careers.

George B. Vaughan, *Chronicle of Higher Education*, October 31, 2008

CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION AND STATEMENT OF THE PROBLEM

Dramatic changes are taking place in community college leadership. Leadership models are moving away from traditional hierarchical forms to participatory decision making models (Cloud, 2010; Wallin, 2010). Positional power and authority of community college presidents is being challenged by calls for power sharing and inclusion in decision making from college stakeholders ranging from campus faculty to accreditors, trustees, regulators, and the public. New educational challenges are driving the changes in leadership models because the older models have been inefficient and at times dysfunctional in meeting demands for doing more with less, providing more public accountability, and grappling with the pressures of global competition for jobs among community college graduates (Cloud, 2010; Kezar, 2004; Wallin, 2010).

This opens the door for conflict. Conflict occurs when parties who are interdependent perceive that their interests are about to be (or have been) frustrated by another (Thomas, 1976). For example, presidents of community colleges exist in a web of interdependence with different stakeholders (boards of trustees, accreditors, funders such as state and federal governments, and the American public) who push to obtain their

interests which, if achieved, may frustrate the interests of a community college president. This tension was recently illustrated by calls from the U.S. Department of Education that education costs be lowered, while presidents of community colleges feel their interest in providing a quality education might be compromised by demands for cost cutting. As state and federal governments have increasingly imposed restrictions affecting how colleges are managed, presidents find these restrictions frustrate their desire to have operational autonomy on their campuses. On their campuses, presidents may push to meet external demands to, for example, admit more students, but by doing so frustrate the interests of the faculty who feel that they are unfairly burdened with increased workloads or feel they have no say in the decision making process (American Association of Community Colleges, 2005, Kezar, 1998).

Community college leaders must deal with intrapersonal conflicts as well. Their personal values and interests are often interdependent, where the honoring of one value or interest may frustrate or interfere with another deeply held value (Deutsch, 1973). Often presidents are called to make choices that may be at odds with their personal values but may be in the best interest of the campuses. For example, a president who believes that all faculty members should receive health benefits might hire adjunct faculty rather than full-time faculty to avoid paying health care costs, but the decision to do so means the difference between offering a course or cancelling it. The resulting dissonance between the values of the president and the values he must pursue for his constituency is a source of conflict.

The traditional models of community college leadership are being tested and strained by the variety of ambiguous and complex problems for which there are no easy

or obviously right answers. Conflict, which has not been addressed in community

college literature except as a symptom of other problems, still remains largely unexplored

(Bolman & Gallos, 2011; Holton, 1998; Kezar, Carducci, & Contreras-McGavin, 2006).

Yet community college presidents will increasingly be faced with complexities of

leadership, some of which will undoubtedly test their ability to deal with conflict as they

are faced with multiple demands from stakeholders both internal and external to their

campuses. As they grapple with these roles, the older models of leadership are failing to

provide guidance on how to successfully engage with conflict (Kezar, 1998).

Additionally, community college presidents face unique challenges as leaders of

public rather than private education institutions in higher education. Community

colleges, as taxpayer funded institutions, must comply with legal requirements for

transparency and accountability that affect governance, communication, and management

practices. Presidents of community colleges operate in an academic and political

environment that is markedly different from private colleges and universities who are not

subject to public disclosure and transparency requirements in the same way as the

presidents of private institutions. The public nature of community colleges, not just

funding but legal accountability and openness laws, affects how they are governed.

Older Models of Conflict Leadership Insufficient

Successful management of conflict in a community college has traditionally been

an important factor for successful presidential leadership. Historically, presidents had

positional authority which enabled them to exercise unilateral decision making on

policies and procedures, without the requirement to consult with their faculties if they

chose not to. Boards of Trustees, functioning on behalf of state legislatures, judged the

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success of a community college president with metrics of efficiency and campus compliance to the status quo. Under this bureaucratic leadership model, community college presidents managed conflict through their positional authority. Faculty and staff seldom publically took issue with the president's decisions or actions. Community college presidents essentially operated as autocrats with their leadership built on U.S. public school models, where bureaucratic efficiency and strict authority were key leadership assets. Change was slow, and policies and procedures were meant to demarcate lines of authority (Cohen & Brawer, 2009)

However, older models of community college leadership have proven inadequate to meet new challenges, necessitating a paradigm shift from autocratic to collaborative leadership. According to the American Association of Community Colleges (AACC), community college presidents of today must be "change agents who are capable of transforming their organizations from bureaucratic, rigid and rule-bound institutions to inclusive, collaborative organizations capable of creative problem solving and continuous improvement" (2005, p. 17).

Collaborative and conflict management skills have become key components of new community college leadership models. In a master overhaul of presidential competencies, the AACC issued the following guidelines for new presidential hires entitled "Leadership Competencies for 2020." The competencies include:

- Creating collaborations and building inclusive coalitions

- Mediating and negotiating different points of view

- Willingness to take risks and make difficult decisions

- Accepting responsibility for decisions

- Demonstrating transformational leadership through authenticity, creativity and vision

- Managing a diversity of people while not offending them (AACC, 2005, pp.5-7).

Although the ability to handle conflict is essential to the longevity of a college president (Vaughan, 2000), many community college presidents perceive conflict as negative, and avoid it at all costs (personal correspondence, George Boggs, March 9, 2011).

Why Do Community College Presidents Need to be Conflict Competent?

Organizational leaders play a central role in moving their organizations forward, especially in times of change, and this often involves dealing with conflict (Fullan, 2007; Heifetz, 1994; Schein, 2004). In a recent survey of organizational human resource officers from both for-profit and not-for-profit organizations, researchers found that 99 % said that conflict was a normal occurrence in their organizations, and 73 % reported that a common source of conflict was poor leadership, which was described as (a) leaders not acting as positive role models with regard to conflict, (b) inability or unwillingness to address underlying tensions that provoke conflicts, and (c) lack of clarity of what is expected in the workplace. While leaders were not only seen as important to resolving conflicts, they were also believed to be responsible for causing many of them. Nine out of 10 of those surveyed rated conflict competence[1]—the ability to manage conflict in a

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[1] I take the term conflict competence from Runde and Flanagan (2010), who have published a series of conflict resolution books about conflict competence. Conflict competence is defined by the authors as "the ability to develop and use cognitive, emotional and behavioral skills that enhance productive outcomes of conflict while reducing the likelihood of escalation or harm" (p. 2).

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positive way—as a very important or critical a leadership skill (Psychometrics, 2009)

Conflict Functions and Attitudes

How a leader chooses to frame conflict is often a matter of which of the multiple

voices (both internal and external) that the leader chooses to listen to. Practicing positive

conflict engagement (framing[2] conflicts as a mutual problem to be solved together, rather

than a contest with a winner and loser) has been found to be beneficial to productivity.

Productivity gains included better group problem solving and decision making and

improved working relationships as exemplified by increased trust, more effective

teamwork, and increased job enjoyment (Deutsch & Coleman, 2000; Pondy, 1967).

When leaders allow or promote attitudes toward conflict that are competitive

(one party wins and the other loses), or avoid conflict engagement altogether,

organizational conflict turns negative. Morale is harmed, which includes erosion of trust

and willingness to work as a team. Productivity consequently decreases (Deutsch &

Coleman, 2000; Pondy, 1967).

Organizational research has supported the notion that conflict has an important

role in keeping an organization vital. Conflict is an essential stabilizing influence

(Deutsch, 1973; Weick, 1995). Weick (1995) described conflict as a natural struggle

between opposite inclinations that exist among organizational members, such as between

risk-takers and risk-avoiders, or between traditionalists who want to follow existing

policies and entrepreneurs who want to alter policies. This constant tension between

opposite organizational forces keeps the organization open to new information. If one

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[2] Since framing of conflict as positive or negative plays a big part in how it is addressed (Deutsch, 1973; 2000), I am adopting the term "framing" for my study. Bolman and Deal (1991) suggested that there are many ways to label an outlook—a mental model, map, mind-sets, schema, or cognitive lenses (p. 12).

type of cognitive framing dominates, then the organization is in danger of losing its stability, and information is filtered through the dominant frame. Coser (1956) argued that conflict is the vehicle by which organizations refresh or revise their norms so as to keep the organization in alignment with the demands of its environment. Conflict, it seems, is unavoidable and likely necessary for positive organizational functioning. As Morton Deutsch (1973) observed, "Fortunately, no one has to face the prospect of a conflict-free existence. Conflict can neither be eliminated nor even suppressed for long" (p.10).

So if conflict is an inevitable part of organizational life, and a leader plays a major role in managing the direction of conflict, then what influences the positive or negative framing of a situation by a leader? Why do some presidents use organizational tensions to build mutual problem-solving capabilities, while others react to those tensions as threats to be "gotten rid of"? Why do some presidents thrive in tension-ridden situations, while others burn out?

Purpose of the Study

The purpose of my study is to describe the community college leadership experience of conflict in a real setting. Studying conflict in context is important because it recognizes that local conditions are essential to understanding conflict. This reflects the postmodern emphasis on context as critical to understanding a phenomenon. For example, what tensions facing the campus have served to bring it together? What tensions might be pulling it apart?

But to study leadership and conflict without including a study of how a leader—as a human being—internally experiences conflict would miss an important element.

Internal experiences (i.e., how people give meaning or frame these experiences to themselves) are important to understanding their actions. These frames serve as the filter through which the presidents of their campuses understand their own actions. "The meaning people make of their experience affects the way they carry out that experience"(Seidman, 2008, p.10). Specifically, this research studies how a community college president experiences and responds to conflict that arises within the context of campus change. Change and conflict are reported through the personal reflections of the President and interviews with key constituencies.

My study also seeks to understand how the president might change over time in his approaches to conflict by what he has learned on the job. I take a constructivist view, as described by Lambert et al. (2002):

> Individuals and organizations bring past experience and beliefs, as well as their cultural histories and world views into the process of learning; all of these influence how we interact with and interpret our encounters with new ideas and events. As our personal perspectives are mediated with the world through inquiry, we construct and attribute meaning to these encounters building new knowledge in the process. This constructive, interpretative work is facilitated and deepened when it is undertaken with others and with reflection. (pp. xvi–xvii)

However, studying the leader even in close detail still provides an incomplete picture. Birnbaum (1992) noted that leadership is a social interaction between the leader and the led, and that the leadership process cannot be meaningfully studied without attention to this mutual influence and to multiple interpretations. For example, Birnbaum (1992) cited an example from his multiple-campus case study of presidential leadership where a president cut personnel in a budget crisis; his actions were considered "courageous" by the trustees and "traitorous capitulation" by the faculty (p. 14).

Significance of This Study

This study addresses several gaps in the academic leadership literature on conflict engagement. First, as noted above, academic leadership scholars have called for more research on conflict as it occurs in a college setting (Kezar, et al., 2006). As educators experiment with more team and collaborative approaches to leadership, increased conflict is a likely outcome. For example, inclusiveness brings diverse voices into decision making, and empowerment of a variety of individuals brings a shift in traditional power dynamics. Different interests may likely be at odds, and leaders will need to find ways to negotiate and manage these differences.

Second, despite the volumes of research on conflict management strategies, educational leaders are still left with blueprints for effective practice that are universal, one-size-fits-all solutions. This literature, as exemplified by interest-based negotiations such as those described by Fisher and Ury (1981), is based on rationalist/instrumental reasoning in shaping conflict responses. This reasoning, which is at the core of most economic models, suggests that individuals act so as to achieve their desired outcomes, so it is assumed that if one can show those in conflicts where their interests lie they will opt for those resolutions which will meet their interests or needs. Yet if this approach explained conflict, why are educational environments so rife with unresolved and unaddressed conflict? (Bolman & Gallos, 2011; Holton, 1998). Since academia attracts highly intelligent, cognitively complex individuals, why does a logical-rational approach to conflict resolution not seem to work? Perhaps there are other factors that influence conflict responses.

This conundrum points to another gap in the research literature. Why do training programs in conflict leadership fail to bring the anticipated change? That is, why do leaders tend to use familiar leadership styles, even when a situation calls for different behavior or adaptive learning? (Runde, et al., 2010; Torbert, 1987).

Altman and Chemers (1984) noted that despite the voluminous research on leadership, there remains a gap in studying the leaders and followers as people. There is a need to fill this gap by studying both the sensemaking or meaning that a leader brings to conflict and the framing (how conflict is interpreted) a leader uses to determine responses to conflict. Furthermore, there is a need to study the way those who are affected by the leader's actions make sense of them.

Hence the central questions that this study investigated are:

- How does the leader (president) of a community college describe his experiences of conflict and responses to it?

- How do members of the community college report their perceptions of the president's responses to conflict?

- What is the relationship between the president's experiences of conflict and his stage of leadership development?

Limitations of the Study

This study is about one community college leader in a particular culture and context, in one time and place. The study, while providing insights into the challenges and the responses, feelings, and behaviors toward different varieties of conflict, cannot provide any generalizable data because the sample size is small. However, as Yin (2003)

pointed out, a case may be generalizable if the findings are similar to other cases which have been reported.. It will make its contribution by means of context-specific data.

Second, as Birnbaum (1992) pointed out in his discussion of leadership roles, the relationship between those who seek to lead and those who are willing to follow enjoy a unique relationship that is influenced by the culture of the campus. This will vary among campuses, but also vary among the conflict-inducing situations. What might be considered a conflict-inducing situation in my case study may be viewed quite differently on another campus.

The work is also limited by potential (but unrecognized) biases of the researcher herself. For example, although the documentation of data has been attended to with some detail, there is still the possibility that the assembly of the data into evidence to support conclusions and analysis may in some way be framed through a lens that is not widely representative of what another researcher might see. However, precautions have been taken, including peer review of data analysis and members' checks of the data. In addition, the triangulation of data by using a variety of different sources may also reduce the possibility of a widely inaccurate, myopic view.

Overview of Contents

In the next chapter, I review pertinent scholarly literature to provide a context for my study. The review includes conflict definitions and theories, a discussion of organizational leadership theories for this study and adult development constructive development theory.

In Chapter 3 I review the methodology and explain why I chose a case study method blended with a grounded theory approach. In Chapter 4, I review the results of

my work, and in Chapter 5, I provide an analysis of the results, with attention to

alternative explanations which seemed the most plausible. In Chapter 6, I summarize and

conclude my work with attention to areas of further study that are needed. Finally, in the

Epilogue I update my readers on campus and leadership developments that occurred after

the data were collected.

CHAPTER II

LITERATURE REVIEW

"The most intense conflicts, if overcome, leave behind a sense of security and calm that is not easily disturbed. It is just the intense conflicts and their conflagration which are needed to produce valuable and lasting results." Carl Gustav Jung

Theoretical Foundations for this Study

In the opening chapter, I provided an overview of the contemporary contexts (conditions or circumstances) in which community college presidents are expected to lead. I pointed out that the model for effective leadership has changed from one based on hierarchical positional authority which maintains the status quo and treats change and conflict as both an exception and an aberration–with no change and no conflict as the harmonious ideal (Deutsch, 2000a; Pondy, 1967). The new model presented by the AACC positions collaboration (mutuality), building coalitions for buy-in to decisions among faculty and staff (as opposed to fiat), the willingness to learn on the job by learning from mistakes, the ability to juggle a diversity of interests and needs of people with a wide variety of viewpoints, and the ability to take risks in making difficult decisions as among the top competences for a successful presidency (AACC, 2020, p. 6). However, the relationship between the experiences of conflict situations and the choices made by presidents in the way they deal with those conflicts has remained largely unexplored. I made the claim that how leaders experience conflict influences how they frame it (as either a positive opportunity for collaborative learning or as a negative threat), and that, if seen in a positive light, conflict has been found to improve working relationships, job performance, and organizational solidarity (Deutsch, 2000a; Johnson,

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Johnson, & Tjosvold, 2000; Tjosvold, 2008); conversely, if seen as a negative, conflict can damage working relationships, harm organizational morale, and hurt job performance.

In this literature review, I have drawn together several topics in order to provide a theoretical framework to aid in reviewing my research results. The theoretical framework is based on leadership concepts collectively known as "cognitive complexity leadership theory" (Kezar, et al., 2006). This framework positions academic leadership within a context of change, conflict and complexity created in large part due to the ambiguity and uncertainty of the problems which face modern community colleges.

This framework represents a group of leadership theorists and researchers including Bolman and Deal (2003); Bolman and Gallos (2011); Heifetz (Heifetz, 1994; Heifetz, Grashow, & Linsky, 2009); Wheatley (1999), Lambert (Lambert, et al., 2002); Bergquist (1992); Birnbaum (Birnbaum, 1992); Kezar, Carducci and Contreras-McGavin (Kezar, et al., 2006), Kegan (1982), Cook-Greuter (2005) and Torbert (Torbert & Associates, 2004). This leadership group is by no means complete but rather was selected because their work has directly or indirectly addressed the confluence between leadership and conflict, and the role of complexity.

To set the stage, I first offer definitions and theories of conflict, describe theories of organizational leadership which I used for this study, and then discuss the implications of this theoretical foundation for the case study.

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Definitions and Theories of Conflict

Definitions

Apart from a suggested definition of *conflict* in authoritative sources such as the Oxford English Dictionary, *conflict* has no commonly agreed-upon definition (See Appendix A for a list of frequently used definitions). In chapter one, I used the definition that parties must be interdependent and perceive that what they want will be frustrated or blocked by someone else (Thomas, 1976). This definition carries three implications: perspective is important (conflict is often seen as either positive or negative or a combination of both); emotional and/or intellectual involvement has occurred; and the subject of the perceived interference is something that matters to people involved.

Perspective refers to how the conflict is viewed—is it seen as an opportunity to "clear the air" and strengthen the relationship? Or is it seen as a threat to the relationship?[3] The degree of intellectual and emotional involvement also depends on perspective. If conflict were viewed on a spectrum, on the benign end might be conflict as an annoyance, frustration moving toward the middle, a tension or strain. On the other end, conflict might be interpreted as a serious disagreement, dispute or hostilities with a perceived threat of physical or emotional harm. In community colleges today, as in much of the world, the multiplicity of diversity among people working together is likely to produce a range of reactions, or, as Fullan (2001) pointed out, "collaborative diversity means conflict" (p. 23). Conflict tensions or strains appeared to be prevalent in this study, while overt hostilities were not. The difference, as one faculty member noted, was

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[3] To risk belaboring the point, the term "conflict" is often used synonymously with everything that is hurtful, bad, harmful, etc. Pondy (1967) made the point that the connotations of the term as harmful have prevented us from giving it a fair hearing. Conflict, he pointed out, is not a disruption to the harmony of an organization, but rather harmony is a disruption in the natural state of conflict tensions in organizations.

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that the situation at the college was not good but was not "toxic" for the faculty (112.9.16).

Perspective and involvement also involve positionality–who has the power and how much in the conflict situation. Historically, those with more positional power (e.g., the power to control such resources as time, money, decision making, etc.) tended to be viewed as having fewer stresses and strains of conflict than those without the power to control these resources (Deutsch, 2000b). These factors were important in my study, because presidents hold positional power, and, as leaders, they have large influence over how conflict is viewed–as something healthy or unhealthy.

Finally, my study examined both interpersonal (between people) and intrapersonal (within the self) conflicts of the president. Although conflict between people has been habitually (and arbitrarily)[4] divided between disputes over problems based on differences in ideas, beliefs, values, goals, methods, etc., or emotional disputes involving relationships (Deutsch, 2000a; Holton, 1998; Pondy, 1967), in reality, this distinction is artificial and in my opinion very unhelpful (see Appendix B for an abbreviated typology of conflicts from Deutsch, 1973).[5] In this study, intrapersonal and interpersonal tensions were intertwined as the president and the college faculty attempted to grapple with problems associated with a major reorganization of the governing unit at the state community college system level and with the issues of a first-time college presidency.

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[4] The distinction between conflict over tasks and between people has been mostly for the convenience of researchers (Chen, 2004; Holton, 1998).
[5] Studies of "task" conflicts (e.g., involving goals, methods for achieving an objective) will devolve into conflicts of relationships if not handled in a positive manner (Holton, 1998)

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Conflict Theories

The relationship between conflicts and problems has been addressed in a number of contexts. While not all problems cause conflicts, all conflicts involve some type of unsolved problem (Deutsch, Coleman, & Marcus, 2006; Fisher & Shapiro, 2006; Fisher, Ury, & Patton, 2011; Fullan, 2001; Runde, et al., 2010; Weitzman & Weitzman, 2000). Well-recognized theories of conflict resolution, most notably win-win negotiations (parties each walk away from negotiations feeling satisfied with the outcome), have offered a process for addressing conflict. The process has included focusing on the problem, not the personalities; looking for needs and wants of the parties, not their stated positions; respecting differences rather than fearing them, and recognizing that most conflicts, at least to some degree involve core concerns including issues of appreciation (your thoughts have merit), affiliation (being treated with respect, not as an enemy), autonomy (freedom to make your own decision on the matter–not coerced), status (being recognized), and role (feeling fulfilled in what you do) (Fisher & Shapiro, 2006; Fisher, et al., 2011). This approach has enjoyed considerable success since it was first introduced more than 30 years ago and has assumed that everyone can learn to practice this form of positive conflict engagement. However it has failed to provide guidance on how organizational context, culture and individual approaches to problem-solving might affect the conflict resolution process. With this in mind, I turn to the organizational leadership theories that address these issues.

Organizational Leadership Theories: Change, Complexity and Ambiguity

Important to the context of this study was the presence of change. The campus system in my study had begun its transition from a centralized governance system headed

by a politically appointed commissioner to a decentralized governance system headed by a board of trustees (composed of community leaders throughout the state). The implications of this change meant the community college presidents were being given more authority and autonomy over their campuses to make critical decisions about budget allocations, hiring, course offerings, and other resource issues. However, the degree of autonomy and authority between the central system and the college presidents was very much in flux. As such, campus change was embedded with complex and ambiguous problems such as how this campus could fulfill a state system mandate to serve a greater number of students while being given no additional state funds. Although the state system through the Board of Trustees gave presidents more control over their own budgets, which parts of the budget were under presidential responsibility remained unclear; for example, control over campus improvements were retained by the system office, while maintenance was not. The complexities of the boundary lines required presidents to negotiate for increased authority and autonomy. Although the situation between community college presidents and their boards varies widely throughout the U.S., what is consistent is that most community college presidents are in a situation of grappling with change (Cloud, 2010; Cohen & Brawer, 2009; Kezar, 1998; Wallin, 2010).

In a special edition of *New Directions for Community Colleges*, Wallin (2010) pointed out that presidents of community colleges were entering an era where change and complexity were the norm. Her advice was that, although change was a challenge, "change leadership in tomorrow's successful colleges will foster leaders who can

anticipate change, analyze the environment, act decisively and collaboratively, and affirm

the value of positive change" (Wallin, 2010, p. 5).

Fullan (2001) went one step further when he noted that "the more complex

society gets, the more sophisticated leadership must become. Complexity means change,

but specifically it means rapidly occurring, unpredictable, nonlinear change (p. ix). He

went on the say that "problems are our friends. Problems are inevitable, but the good

news is that you can't learn or be successful without them . . . problems are our friends is

another way of saying that conflict is essential to any change effort" (Fullan, 2001, p. 25).

Cognitive Complexity Theory

The relationship of change and conflict in organizational life has been positioned

in a number of ways. For example, Bolman and Deal (2003) suggested that conflict

might be a viewed as a normal occurrence in some situations, while in others conflict

might be a sign that something was very wrong in the organization and needed to be

fixed. Organizational leaders need to exercise cognitive complexity (e.g., to see

situations and interpret their roles from multiple points of view) in order to be effective.

To use only one or two perspectives or frames is to miss essential contextual clues as to

what the organizational challenges (problems) are and how best to address them, leaving

a leader in a state of "cluelessness" (Bolman & Deal, 2003, p.4). Bolman and Deal, after

an extensive study of leadership of more than 300 organizations, determined that four

frames might serve as archetypes for the organizational leader. They consolidated major

schools of organizational thought into four perspectives (called frames): structural,

human resource, political, and symbolic (2003).

The structural frame emphasizes the importance of formal roles and relationships in an organization and the accountability obtained through policies and procedures. Based on their studies of organizations, Bolman and Deal (2003) concluded that, when leaders use a structural frame, they see conflict as a result of roles; policies and procedures are not being clearly defined with the solution being to restructure them. Colleges under this frame would be metaphorically seen as efficient factories.

If a leader uses a human resource frame, faculty and staff would be seen as a family. A president as leader would focus on personal needs and feelings, as well as focus on adjusting organizational roles so that people were matched to their interests and skills. Conflict would likely be seen as a misalignment between people and their roles or as a lack of attention to the cognitive and emotional needs of employees.

A leader who uses a political frame would view organizational life through the metaphor of arenas in which organizational members negotiate for their interests and coalitions are built to support buy-in of ideas. Conflict, in the form of a diversity of viewpoints, would be considered a normal part of everyday life.

Leaders who concentrate on creating shared values and meanings would focus on the symbolic nature of cultural values, rituals, stories, heroes, and myths that define the organization's personality. Conflicts would be addressed as a need to reenergize the organization's symbols and rituals and beliefs and once again create shared meaning within the organization (Bolman & Deal, 2003).

Cultural-Relational Perspective. This fundamental set of frames has been adapted by scholars, e.g., (Baldridge, 1971; Bergquist, 1992; Birnbaum, 1992; Bolman & Gallos,

2011) to explain how presidents might determine leadership strategies for their colleges. For example, community colleges have traditionally valued efficiency and hierarchical bureaucratic organization as reflective of a structural approach to leadership. While some community colleges have adopted a collegial approach which reflects both a human resource expectation of affiliation and also part of the political aspect where autonomy is emphasized, ideas are debated and decisions arrived at through creating supporting coalitions. The culture of a college—its values, history, beliefs and assumptions which the faculty and staff have about themselves as members of the college—reflects the symbolic nature embedded in most colleges. Each of these four ways of interpreting an organization's needs and a leader's role was important within this case study.

In addition to these fundamental frames, Bergquist (1992) found an additional cultural framework within some colleges and community colleges which he called a developmental or learning culture. Bergquist noted that a developmental or learning culture was a rarer cultural form than the other four discussed above. This culture focuses on cognitive, affective, and social maturation for all its members—faculty, students and staff. Personal openness and service to others are combined with systematic institutional research and curricular planning. This culture combines a managerial concern for evidence-based decision making, accountability, constant assessment, and continuous correction for quality improvement. Transparency, accountability, inclusion, and empowerment of input into decision making are included among the hallmarks. In this culture, as with the collegial and political cultures, conflicts due to a multiplicity of ideas are considered a natural part of the culture.

Bergquist's cultural snapshot, as with the contextual leadership framework reviewed earlier, provides a tangible rather than an abstract gauge to make sense of organizational influences on conflict engagement in my case study. These organizational models provide concrete examples of values, practices, and symbols that compete among the "cacophonous and multivocal" (Tierney, 2008) elements in community colleges. They also provide guides for participant observations, interviews, and review of written communications, which, as Tierney (2008) advised, are useful to understanding how members of an institution interpret the school's culture to themselves and to others. If leadership is a mutually created reality between a leader and those who have agreed to be led, then these two organizational leadership models provide clues to how to identify this reality (Birnbaum, 1992).

Adaptive Learning Perspective. The context and culture within which leadership is practiced provide a solid foundation for studying community college leadership, but they lack one quality—they focus on leadership as a person—a role (Bergquist, 1992; Birnbaum, 1992; Bolman & Deal, 2003). Other perspectives on the leadership role as articulated by Heifetz (1994), Wheatley, (1999), Lambert, et al (2002) and Uhl-Bein (Uhl-Bien, Marion, & McKelvey, 2007) suggest that leadership is not leader-centric but a process, and the leader is not the center but on the side as a facilitator and teacher to nurture leadership in others within the organization. Although the theories as articulated by Bolman and Deal(2003) for cognitive complexity, and the cultural-relational perspective as represented by Birnbaum (1992) and Bergquist (1992) recognize the joint obligation between leader and followers, these perspectives do not position leadership as

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teaching and learning. Within the adaptive learning perspective, leadership is viewed not as a singular role but as a shared responsibility of everyone in the organization (Heifetz, 1994; Kezar, et al., 2006; Lambert, et al., 2002; Uhl-Bien, et al., 2007; Wheatley, 1999). Another distinguishing factor is that conflict is seen not as an outcome of change but rather as a catalyst for change (Heifetz, 1994; Uhl-Bien, et al., 2007; Wheatley, 1999). This group of theorists embraced conflict as a catalyst because they contend that problems today are so complex and ambiguous—and predicted outcomes so uncertain— that conflict in the form of a competing, multiplicity of ideas is critical both to diagnosing problems and determining how best to solve them (Heifetz, 1994; Kezar, et al., 2006).

Heifetz (1994) has explained this process as diagnosing the difference between complex, routine problems (authoritative solutions have been successfully applied to these problems in the past), and novel or adaptive problems (for which the solutions come not from authoritative solutions but rather from adaptive changes in the organization). These problems are novel, ambiguous, complex and the outcomes of action to solve them are uncertain. Heifetz explained that:

> Everyone has a particular capacity for tolerating conflict. Some people are comfortable working through conflict, while most avoid it entirely or try to get through it as quickly as possible. But surfacing the relevant conflicts is essential when an organization is falling short of its aspirations. To do this well requires an approach to conflict that teases out the unacknowledged differences in perspectives on the work issues that may be preventing the organization from reaching its espoused aspiration. It requires acknowledging the many competing visions, values, and views that may be alive in the organization even if they are not articulated. . . . Orchestrating conflict is a discipline. It requires seeing the process as a necessary step in the journey toward a better future, tolerating the moments your people are not working well together, and believing that working through some rough patches will help solidify their collective effort and commitment. (1994, p. 149)

Heifetz (1994) contended that out of conflict engagement comes a discovery of common ground and shared values. The adaptation is not capitulation to the external environment but rather a judicious selection from among the values of the cultural DNA of the organization to determine what is critical to the organization's values and what is not. This approach to leadership is not easy as it may require the organization to collectively tolerate some internal organizational hostility for a while—when most people simply want to do nothing, avoid the problems, strike back at someone, or look to an authority to make the problem go away.

This approach to leadership was extremely useful in this case study because it anticipated a variety of potential responses to conflict and also foreshadowed the mindset which I encountered among the faculty regarding what they expected from their president. Uhl-Bein et al. (2007) suggested that many leadership models (i.e., leader-centric) were predicated on the last century of industrial-age, top-down, bureaucratic operations.[6] These models were based on an economy in which physical production was the dominant form of employment. However, in the last few decades, the U.S. and other economies have emerged into a knowledge economy, where complex problems are encountered not just by leaders but by everyone in the organization. As Bettes and Hitt (1995) observed, "This new age is about an economy where knowledge is a core commodity and the rapid production of knowledge and innovation is critical to organizational survival" (as cited by Uhl-Bien, 2007, p. 299). Complex and ambiguous problems are a basic fact of life. The role of community college presidents within this paradigm would be to energize the process of group learning in order to work

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[6] Bureaucratic models have typically included situational, trait, behavioral, transformational/transactional models. See Appendix C for a representative list of major leadership theories, and Appendix D for useful definitions of leadership by various leadership scholars.

collaboratively to identify and offer potential solutions. In this role, presidents must be especially quick to recognize and learn from their mistakes and to create an atmosphere where tensions are seen as ways to create "imperatives to act and to elaborate strategy, information and adaptability" to new situations (Uhl-Bien, et al., 2007, p. 311). As these descriptions of the work of Heifetz, Wheatley and Uhl-Bien reveal, leadership as a role is not entirely dead–it has expanded to include leadership responsibilities and empowerment to organizational members.

Empirical Studies

In searching for real world applications of conflict, two studies of conflict in community colleges provided a helpful guide for me. In a study of collegiality in a community college with unionized faculty, Hartley (2010) found that, despite the sometimes contentious relations between the faculty union and the president, collegial relations were maintained due to the president's personal openness to mutual influence, willingness to share and explain budget data, and collaborative attitude toward problem-solving with the faculty. In a second study of community college leadership effectiveness and conflict, Pettitt and Ayers (2002) concluded that critical factors mitigating campus conflicts were perceptions of communications, collaboration, and mutual influence between campus administrative leaders and employees. In both studies, the problems were neither simple nor routine but complex and ambiguous. In the case of the unionized campus, the president was continually involved working behind the scenes to strengthen relationships with faculty, bringing them in as partners in the leadership and change process.

A search of conflict-related literature within academia—both four-year and community colleges—resulted in two additional studies of conflict and one study of stage-related leadership. Two dissertations focused on conflict management during university strategic planning processes to determine if the conflict was functional or dysfunctional to the process. Both studies—self-reports by senior administrators who led the process—found that conflict had been introduced and facilitated at key points in the process to encourage broader and more inclusive decision making (Socci, 2001; Wallace, 2010). Both studies concluded that conflict could be useful when tackling novel problems. In a review of community college leadership challenges, Amey (2005) concluded, while using Kegan's (1994) stage-development theory as her guide, that the more perspectives leaders could bring to a problem, the more likely they were to develop successful solutions.

Among numerous case studies of community college leadership related to leadership qualities, Birnbaum (1992) found that community college presidents were judged as successful leaders by their faculties when they demonstrated multiple framing thinking toward their leadership—that is, applying cognitive complexity. Additionally, Birnbaum found that presidents who were judged average or as failures in their leadership tended to use only one frame or mental model to view a community college—the bureaucratic model. This was particularly true of first-time community college presidents. The second most frequently applied leadership frame used by first-time presidents, especially community college presidents, was the political model. However, regardless of whether a president used one or two models, organizational members could only recall their president approaching leadership issues from a

bureaucratic model, which led researchers to conclude that bureaucratic models must be used with extreme caution, as it is likely to be perceived by college faculty as dominant and to overshadow presidential efforts at collaborative or participatory leadership.

In a different use of framing, Eddy (2005) studied how college presidents communicated or framed their administrative goals. In a range of studies, Eddy found that presidents who took into account the culture of their colleges and framed their messages to appeal to the values, beliefs and traditions of their colleges were judged to be more successful and effective as leaders than presidents who focused on their own agenda and failed to recognize the cultural expectations of their campuses.

These studies point out the importance of context and relationships in framing how leadership is judged. Presidents who focus on mutuality with organizational members and demonstrate an awareness of organizational cultural values are more likely to be seen as successful presidents

Constructive Developmental Leadership Theory

In the definitions of leadership explored above, the expectations for leadership have required community college leaders to have cognitive complexity (able to take multiple perspectives), to value different cultures and nurture relationships within them, and to be continual teachers who can utilize tension as a catalyst for learning and leadership development. Each of these theories requires not only cognitive complexity but also emotional and social maturity, which includes "balancing one's own needs with the needs of others" (Loevinger, 1976 as cited in Oja & Reiman, 2007, p.95).

In order to explore the research question of how the president experiences conflict, I turned to the constructive developmental branch of adult lifespan psychology,

which explores the growth of the complexity of individuals' judgments, actions, and interpretations throughout their lives. Specifically, I am interested in the area of constructive developmental research which focuses on ego maturity. This theory brings together three developmental dimensions: (a) cognitive maturity, in which knowledge is constructed and contextual; (b) integrated identity, in which values are reconstructed over time; and (c) mature relationships, an interpersonal dimension through which individuals develop respect for both themselves and others—and collaborate to assimilate and accommodate multiple viewpoints and needs (Baxter Magolda, 2004 ; Kegan, 1994; Oja & Reiman, 2007).

Constructive developmental theory provides a promising approach for this study because conflict engages not only cognitive reasoning, but also emotional capacity (intrapersonal) and social cognition (interpersonal), which are determinants of an individual's initial conflict response. In particular, positive conflict engagement requires:

- The willingness or capacity to question underlying assumptions;

- Recognition and appreciation of interdependence with mutual needs to be recognized; favorable attitude toward one's self and others;

- The ability to draw from and include a diverse range of ideas, which recognizes the need to find a solution that responds to the interests of all;

- Willingness to give and receive honest feedback;

- Willingness to cooperate in enhancing others' power (through help with knowledge, skills, resources, etc.) to help others accomplish their goals; and

- Definition of a problem as a mutual problem to be solved (Deutsch, 2000a; Johnson, et al., 2000).

Constructive Developmental Theory Defined. Constructive developmental theory is comprised of two central ideas: (a) knowledge is constructed based on past experiences, beliefs, personal histories, and our own world views or mindsets; and (b) human beings emotionally and cognitively mature over time. Our growth is constructive in the sense that a person constructs meaning or interpretations of life's experiences and uses these contexts to draw assumptions about life and to build values and beliefs on those assumptions. These assumptions are the foundations of an individual's mental model. The mental model is composed of both cognitive and emotional reasoning patterns (Kegan, 1994; Torbert & Associates, 2004).

Developmental growth is a tension between assimilation and accommodation to new experiences in life. Assimilation occurs when new experience and events such as knowledge and skills are brought into an existing mental framework. In other words, we make sense of these experiences by relating them to what we already know and believe. But when we encounter new experiences that simply can not be explained through our current way of thinking and believing, then we have reached a point where we either will reject the new experiences or we begin to adjust our mental and emotional framework to accommodate these new experiences (Kegan, 1982; Lambert, et al., 2002). This period of accommodation is sometimes referred to as being "stuck" between the older ways of making sense of things and the emerging new ways of making sense. Once the new accommodation has taken place, then we begin the assimilation process again by incorporating new experiences into our new mental framework. This is the process of adult constructive developmental growth which Robert Kegan explained as a continuous

cycle back and forth as we gradually grow toward increasing mental and emotional

maturity (1994).

In summary, the basic propositions of constructive developmental theory include:

1. People build their understanding of the world and of themselves incrementally

   through constructing and interpreting their experiences.

2. These experiences are built on previous interpretations that are constantly

   readjusted to accommodate new life experiences.

3. Each person's growth toward ego maturity occurs at a different rate, but there

   are identifiable patterns that define ways of organizing their experiences into

   mental models.

4. As a person moves through orders of development, earlier ones still remain as

   "perspectives" that can be called upon.

5. The later stages are not "better" (that is the later stages are not more moral or

   intellectual) but rather are more accommodating to meeting the challenges of

   life. Ego constructs has been found to be empirically different from IQ or

   intelligence (Cook-Greuter, 2004; McCauley, Drath, Palus, O'Connor, &

   Baker, 2006).

Stages of Leadership Development. William Torbert, organizational

psychologist, is generally credited with the first application of constructive

developmental theory to the study of leadership (McCauley, et al., 2006). Torbert

focused on how cognitive and affective reasoning shapes a leader's judgments and

behaviors. He termed this "action-logics"—that is, how a leader's cognitive and affective

logic affects the selection of actions to fit a particular situation. One of the central issues

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he investigated was why smart people (those with high IQs and advanced managerial skills) seemed to make "dumb" decisions—decisions that detracted from rather than enhanced organizational effectiveness. In order to measure leadership characteristics, Torbert worked with Susanne Cook-Greuter to adapt the work of Jane Loevinger, who had developed the first measurement system for ego maturity, the Washington University Sentence Completion Test. Torbert and Cook-Greuter created the Leadership Development Profile. The profile was of interest to me because it seeks to measure characteristics of the type of intrapersonal and interpersonal behaviors that would most likely be needed to engage in conflict in a positive way (Torbert & Associates, 2004).

Although Kegan (1994)[7] and Torbert (Torbert & Associates, 2004) and later researcher/practitioners (Joiner & Josephs, 2007) offer similar descriptions of the stages of development, I have chosen Torbert's descriptions because they focused on leadership and have been verified through almost 40 years of empirical testing among thousands of corporate and not-for-profit senior administrators. Torbert's (2004) seven stages may be characterized as the journey from solipsistic to collaborative. In the table below, the seven stages are described with a focus on problem solving which is predicted by the stage theory. For example, at the *Opportunist* stage, individuals are highly invested in their own way of thinking, treat dissenting opinions as hostile threats, and seek confirming feedback. Steve Jobs, in his younger years, for example, was noted for this behavior.

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[7] Harvard educational psychologist, Robert Kegan, is credited with creating the term *constructive developmentalism* and is one of the founders of this field of inquiry. William Torbert (Torbert & Associates, 2004) credits, among others, both Jane Loevinger and Robert Kegan as providing the foundation for his work. Both Kegan and Torbert agree that there are strong similarities in their approaches and measurement metrics (Kegan, 2009; Torbert, 2004).

Table 1: Stages of Leadership Maturity

Stage	Leadership Behavior
Opportunist	Seeks short-term, concrete advantage for self; rejects feedback; externalizes blame; manipulates others as either charming or aggressive.
Diplomat	Seeks acceptance by colleagues; observes protocol; avoids conflict to save own and others' face.
Expert	Seeks perfect solutions; accepts feedback only from known experts.
Achiever	Seeks results driven by teamwork; welcomes feedback if related to obtaining goals, but not open to examining goals themselves.
Individualist	Likely to question underlying assumptions of conversation; seeks out diverse viewpoints; may experience inability to make timely decisions because unable to weigh or balance viewpoints.
Strategist	Seeks to construct shared vision; uses conflict resolution to transform relationships, not just achieve outcomes; seeks feedback for personal improvement.
Alchemist	Comfortable with holding conflicting ideas and stakeholder interests (including own) in balance without bias toward one over the other; seeks feedback continuously for personal improvement; balances long-term and short-term needs.

Note. Adapted from *Action Inquiry* by Torbert and Associates, 2004, San Francisco, CA. Copyright 2004 by Bill Torbert. Adapted with permission.

Brilliantly single-minded, Jobs led through his visionary passion, but routinely pitted one division against another in the belief that competition bred excellence (Isaacson, 2011). In the second stage, *Diplomat,* the opposite action logic occurs. The person becomes highly invested in socially expected behavior and group norms, and dissenting opinions are seen as threats because the opinions challenge group harmony. In the next transition, the *Expert* becomes less invested in group norms and more in

expertise and authority as sources of power. Experts look to those with recognized

expertise for feedback, while tending to discount feedback from others they do not

recognize as experts (Torbert & Associates, 2004; Joiner & Josephs, 2007). At the

Achiever stage, a person relies heavily on linear logic as the means to deliver results.

Goals achievement is the measure of success. If the means to achieve their goals are not

successful, then *Achievers* are willing to reconsider their means, but not their goals.

Feedback is sought to the extent that it helps in meeting goals, not for revisiting the

wisdom of the goals. At the *Individualist* stage, leaders begin to identify themselves not

only with their professional expertise but also take into account their personal

development. The *Individualists* are, for the first time, beginning to seek out different

opinions, but are sometimes overwhelmed with these different viewpoints and may feel

stuck when having to make decisions. In earlier stages, leaders tend to seek and accept

advice from only those they considered experts and those with the power to help them

achieve their goals. As *Individualists* they begin to recognize the value of ideas from

those they might have in an earlier stage considered to be unqualified to give opinions.

The *Strategist* stage is the first point of entry into a self-transforming way of life, that is,

a person begins to feel comfortable in many different and challenging environments. A

Strategist's decision making is less dependent on others or on circumstances, yet, at the

same time, the *Strategist* recognizes that both relationships and circumstances need to be

taken into account when making decisions. The *Strategist* sees leadership not as

positional authority but as a process which is collaborative with many co-leaders,

depending on the situation. A shared common purpose transcends rules and procedures

as the guiding action logic. At this stage, negative feedback is welcomed as a source of

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commitment to improvement. At the latest stage identified by Torbert and others, the *Alchemist* is able to address daily operational issues and long-term transformational change with equal ease. For example, an *Alchemist* leader in education might be found facilitating faculty collaborations in school governance, while at the same time working to transform maladaptive practices found within the educational system and helping to redefine the meaning of education itself (Torbert & Associates, 2004; Joiner & Josephs, 2007).

From the intrapersonal perspective, as a leader integrates more perspectives into action logics, role conflict becomes less of an issue, because the leader feels comfortable with multiple conflicting roles and expectations (Torbert & Associates, 2004).

Empirical Research Studies. A number of studies provide insight into how constructive developmental stages might influence conflict responses, but only one has focused on conflict engagement in relationship to stages. In a study of 200 CEOs, Eigel and Kuhnert (2005) found that managers who scored at *Achiever* levels or earlier stages habitually responded to workplace problems as challenges to their competency and consistently responded with either highly assertive or avoiding conflict behaviors. The authors termed this "winning at all costs or avoiding at all costs" (p. 33). At later stages, from late *Achiever* on through *Alchemist*, leaders tended to use a greater variety of responses, utilizing both contingency and collaborative responses. By the *Strategist* and *Alchemist* stages, leaders were able to consistently decipher the types of problems that needed a collaborative approach and to bring group processes into play to achieve results.

Other empirical studies that offer insight into attributes useful to positive conflict engagement include that of Smith (1980), who found that managers in earlier

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developmental stages preferred to enforce the decisions of others, rather than to make their own interpretation of the workplace problem. Managers at later stages of development tended to behave just the opposite. They formulated decisions based on their own opinions and tended to rely on their own expertise in interpreting company rules when tackling ambiguous problems. Weathersby (1993) found similar results and, in addition, found that managers at later stages showed greater ability to recognize and draw upon recurring patterns in their personal experiences.

Merron, Fisher and Torbert (1987) in a study of how managers might interpret in-basket correspondence, observed that managers who were at earlier stages of development tended to treat each problem as an isolated event, without questioning the framing of the problem or probing into the potential underlying causes. Managers at later stages tended to do the opposite: They looked for underlying assumptions in the way the problem was defined and perceived the problem as a symptom of an underlying problem, and they tended to redefine the problem.

Fisher and Torbert (1991) examined 17 managers about their on-the-job experiences; however, they looked specifically at later stages of development comparing *Achievers* to *Strategists*. They compared how each related to subordinates and superiors and how they proposed and implemented ideas. *Achievers* tended to influence subordinates to accept their assessment of a problem, while *Strategists* tended to work with subordinates to create a synthesis of different viewpoints on the problems. While both *Achievers* and *Strategists* reported that they worked with peers, subordinates, and superiors as equal partners in achieving organizational goals, they varied in their styles. *Achievers* tended to "sell" their view of what the correct course of action should be, while

Strategists tended to negotiate a common frame for a course of actions. Both saw awareness of others' points of view as important, but for different reasons. *Achievers* saw this as important to getting buy-in from others, while *Strategists* saw it as important to a mutual solution that required the ability to question and revise their own goals—and not just getting others to revise theirs.

The research on leadership demonstrates the complexity and the dynamics of the phenomenon. While a leader may be able to be identified as an *Achiever* or a *Strategist*, the relationship with the organization must be understood as well. With the broader framework of contemporary organizational leadership theories, work on theories of academic leadership has increasingly highlighted the dynamic relationship between leaders and their organizations. On the one hand, the more interaction between community college presidents and their faculties, the most likely the presidents were to be perceived as successful and effective leaders. On the other hand, the more interaction between presidents and their faculties, and the more collaborative the work, the more likely that conflict tensions would emerge.

CHAPTER III

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

The Design Strategy

"Establishing the how and why of complex human situations is a classic example of the use of case studies . . ." (Yin, 1994)

My choice of a qualitative grounded theory approach within a case study methodology was determined by what I wanted to know. I wanted to identify a set of actions (responding to or creating conflict) that a president of a community college might employ. I wanted to see how the president described his actions regarding conflict and how he described his experiences. In other words, I wanted to know why he chose those actions, and how those actions were perceived within the organization (did the organizational members perceive the president's actions as he intended them?). What might explain these results? These criteria led me to look for a research methodology that would allow me to gather data in real-time event (which precluded an historical study); I also wanted a method that probed not only how the president personally felt and understood organizational conflict (that is, his "lived experiences"), but also took into account his responses as seen through the lens of the organizational context at the community college.

Methodologies considered but rejected. In reviewing research methods, I considered an ethnographical approach, but since ethnography seeks to describe and interpret cultural behaviors with the intention of illuminating what is enduring to the

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culture, I determined this was not an appropriate method (Schram, 2006). My research, unlike ethnography, is not focused on the culture but rather seeks to use the culture as a contextual backdrop to gain a greater understanding of how the president decides what actions to take on issues he considers conflicted. I also considered narrative studies in which I would chronicle the president's current role at a community college within the context of his individual experiences and study the meaning of these experiences. Although the prospect of telling the president's story within the context of his life was an intriguing prospect, I determined that my work needed to expand beyond the viewpoint of one person. I wanted to be able to let the story unfold not only from the president's perspective, but also the perspective of those who were affected by the president's decisions. This led me to a case study methodology in which I used multiple sources of data and a grounded theory approach in which I used both a theoretical framing of organizational leadership theory to provide the perspective (how a leader experiences and responds to conflict), and to enable the data to speak for themselves and to let theories rise from within the data.

Grounded Theory: Method or Approach? One of the benefits or challenges of choosing a research methodology is that the methodologies are not as rigidly divided as they might have been a decade or so ago. Researchers today have the opportunity to combine methods to achieve research goals. Grounded theory as a methodology assumes that the researcher, although familiar with the literature surrounding the phenomenon under study, has no prior theoretical or conceptual framework going into the project, and wants theory to derive from the data. However, I chose to use a guiding theory to focus

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my work. I used organizational leadership theory which draws upon cognitive complexity and adult complexity stage developmental theories as articulated Bolman and Deal,(2003), Bolman and Gallos (2011), Heifetz (1994), Kegan (1994), and William Torbert (Torbert & Associates, 2004). As such a grounded theory methodology was not appropriate (as I had a theoretical framework in mind when I began my research), but I also wanted to let the data speak for itself and if additional (or other) theories emerged, I wanted to be alert to their existence and not prematurely foreclose on one theory to explain my findings.

A grounded theory approach set within the qualitative research tradition, enabled me to document my findings through thick descriptions which would allow my reader to form her/his own judgments along with mine–and possibly to disagree with interpretations of my evidence. A grounded theory approach is suited for research questions that focus on "individual processes, inter-personal relations and the reciprocal effects between individuals and larger social processes . . . as for example, inter-personal cooperation and conflict." (Charmaz, 2004, pp.497-498)

Case Study Methodology. One of the challenges in selecting a case study methodology is that leading scholars do not agree precisely on a definition of a case study (Yin, 1994). According to Stake (1995), a case is not defined by how it is studied but what is studied. Research methods are not a defining factor. What determines a case study is its boundaries (time, place, issue), real-time, field-orientation, and emphasis on developing contextual nuances as important to understanding the case. Yin (1994) suggests that it is the nature of the research questions–asking why and how–that make a

case study a preferred method. This is because the research questions focus on operational links that are traced over a time period, rather than looking for frequencies or incidents.

For Yin (1994) the scope of study is a critical component. A case study focuses on "contemporary phenomenon within a real-life context, especially when the boundaries between phenomenon and context are not clearly evident," and "covers contextual conditions as they might be highly pertinent to your phenomenon of study" (p. 13). And finally, Yin notes that case studies have historically focused on an individual or individuals as the unit of analysis. In the early case studies in American sociology, life histories provided insight into the why and how of people such as juvenile delinquents because the methodology allowed the researcher to follow the subjects and use multiple approaches to data collection such as interviews and observations.

Unlike Stake (1995), Yin (1994) further defines a case by data collection and analysis strategies of data triangulation and theoretical proposition or purposes. Triangulation draws from multiple sources of data which are compared to one another to determine overlaps and anomalies. Triangulation of different sources helps to ensure that the researcher does not inadvertently attach a particular explanation or theory of "what's going on here" because of limited or artificially homogenous data sources. An eclectic body of data assumes some anomalies but also provides an opportunity to do a broad-case comparison to see if different data sources corroborate each other. This was particularly true with regard to the mix of interviews, documents and observations. My interviews provided a self-report from my research participant on his experiences and actions, while documents provided an organizational "agreed upon" version of the event or issue, while

emails provided an historical record of viewpoints at the time of the event, and site observations in some cases contradicted what I had hypothesized as a possible explanation.

My research project was suited to a case study approach for the following reasons: First, I chose an individual as my unit of analysis. Second, my questions served as my purpose and created conceptual boundaries–they defined the area I was interested in – and both time and place created "boundaries"–a site of a community college during a selected period of time. Third, my work needed to be real-time and field based because contextual nuances of time and place were critical to understanding how a president responds to conflict. As Yin (1994) suggested, I had no clear boundaries between the phenomenon (conflict response by a president) and the context (how context affected his responses).

Fourth, my logic for linking the questions to the data was, as stated previously, to gain a greater understanding of how the president's experiences of conflict were reflected (or not) in his actions, thus I needed to use multiple types of data. My data sources included phenomenologically focused, semi-structured, in-depth interviews with the president to gather information on his life's history, details of his experience as president with regard to challenges and conflicts he encountered. I used semi-structured interviews with others at the college to learn their perspectives on the president's conflict behavior. To offer an historical perspective, I consulted written artifacts including emails, committee minutes, and school policy documents including a self study to the regional accrediting agency.

Data triangulation was not just for sources of data, but also enabled a triangulation of rival explanations as the information from data was analyzed. Yin (1994) argues that theories have a place in case study research because they are the templates with which to compare data with theory.

Case Study Methods with a Grounded Theory Approach. A case study methodology and grounded theory approach are compatible. They both focus on people's interactions, actions and contextual nuances (Creswell, 1998). The grounded theory approach enabled the use of emergent data to develop rival explanations that would not have been possible had I used a case study method only, as the case study methodology called for previously developed theory to serve as a template (Yin, 1994). Both grounded theory and case study methods were compatible in that both use multiple sources of data - the case study to triangulate with multiple viewpoints and grounded theory to provide a wider base of data from which to draw emergent themes. In summary, the combination of a case study method with a grounded theory approach allowed the necessary latitude to explore in-depth the "how" and "why" questions which were at the core of my research.

As I discuss in the following sections of this chapter, I followed Yin's (1994) three criteria for a research design: (a) the unit of analysis is the center of the research; (b) the data collected can be linked to theoretical propositions stated in the case research (in this case, the theoretical frameworks), and (c) criteria are stated for interpreting findings.

Data Collection Strategies

My data collection strategies were based on three principles (Yin, 1994): (a) use

multiple sources of data for triangulation, (b) maintain a case study database which

contains all research information (which I did by establishing a database on my

computer), and (c) create a trackable chain of evidence (which traces raw data coding

through to analysis, as discussed in the data analysis section that follows). In addition, I

selected data instruments that would cover a range of settings, events, and individuals, as

well as, when appropriate, individuals' relationships to one another, such as affinity

groups.

I selected five data collection strategies, including (a) semi-structured interviews

with the president; (b) semi-structured interviews with faculty, staff, and senior

administrators; (c) artifacts analysis including reports, emails, committee minutes, school

brochures, policy manuals, collective bargaining agreement between school and state,

and presentations; (d) on site observations recorded in field notes; and (e) the Leadership

Development Profile (LDP). The table below provides an overview of each data

collection strategy, questions the instrument addressed, importance and potential

weaknesses of each source of evidence.

Table 2: Data Collection for Triangulation of Data

Sources of Evidence	Question Addressed	Importance	Weaknesses
Artifacts including reports, emails, committee meetings, presentations, reports	What school issues are seen as conflicts, if any? What actions or outcome result from issue conflicts?	Can be reviewed repeatedly Not created as a result of a case study. Contains exact details. Provides historical perspective.	Irretrievability – if collection is incomplete then potentially biased. Reporting bias of author Editing for transcripts

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Table 2: Data Collection for Triangulation of Data (continued)

Sources of Evidence	Question Addressed	Importance	Weaknesses
Interviews: Self-reports by president (key actor)	How does he perceive conflict (issues, situations, etc)?	Focuses directly on research topic. Direct perceptions – not second hand.	Bias due to poorly constructed questions. Response bias; poor recall; giving interviewer what she wants to hear
Interviews: Reports by faculty, sr. administrators and staff	Discussions about school culture (governance, structures, norms, organizational values and processes	Provides third-party perspective on president's self reports.	Bias due to poorly constructed questions. Response bias; poor recall; giving interviewer what she wants to hear
Direct Observation: school events (all-school meetings); committee meetings (faculty forum, president's council, department chair meetings) recorded in field notes	How does the president behave? What does he say? How do others react to him and what he says? Tone? Tensions? Side-conversations?	Covers events in real time; reduces chance of bias due to interviewee's moods or attitudes.	May impact the events by researcher's presence; may misinterpret event due to random selection (rather than constant, consistent observation)
Survey (leadership development profile	How does the president describe his responses/attitudes toward conflict? What is the relationship, if any, between president's cognitive complexity and response to conflict?	High inter-rater reliability. This test is one of the most widely used and validity-tested instructions in psychometrics.	Might be influenced by time and place survey is administered; depends on skill of researcher to draw correlations from test to case study.

Data from column 4 (weaknesses) from *Case study research* (p. 80) by R.K. Yin, 1994, Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage Publications. (Yin, 1994). Copyright Sage Publications (1994). Adapted with permission.

Document review. The documents provided clear historical details of events, whereas the president and members of the faculty I interviewed were sometimes uncertain about the timing of specific events. For example, when one faculty member

spoke of past tensions with former commissioners for the state community colleges, she could not recall the dates during which the various commissioners had served. I was able to reconstruct the history in a chart by reviewing the course catalogs dating back to early 1980s. The regional accreditation self study for 2008 was also invaluable for providing a chronology of events at Excel community college, but also for detailing the processes, procedures and problems which the school was facing. Emails provided a rich source of additional information and also served to further triangulate the data I collected through extensive interviews (see Appendix E for the documents list).

Interviews. In reviewing the phenomenological methods as a possible approach, Seidman (2008) makes a useful distinction. A researcher might examine institutional and personal artifacts such as emails and documents, and conduct observations to understand how people behave and express their experiences. However, to understand how people make meaning of an experience, then the interview is the proper tool. And as he observes, all research is messy, and sometimes multiple methods are needed.

My research approach drew upon phenomenological techniques for my interviews in that I sought to understand how the president experienced conflict from his viewpoint and to understand the meaning he attributed to the experience. Although observations can add to our understanding, they can also lead to misinterpretation; Seidman (2008) uses the example of seeing a man chopping wood in the forest. How does one interpret the woodchopper's behavior? Is he supplying a logger, trying to get exercise or preparing wood to heat his home? In order to understand behavior, we need to put it in context. Interviewing provides that access to context in order to gain a better

understanding of the person's behavior. Seidman also suggests that "a basic assumption in in-depth interviewing research is that the meaning people make of their experience affects the way they carry out that experience (Blumer, 1969, in Seidman, 2008, p. 10). This was valuable advice in that I learned through my interviews with my research participant how he experienced conflict, and then could trace how he formulated strategies in response to that experience. To interview someone in-depth enables the researcher to put behavior in context, and this in turn provides access to a greater understanding of the actions (Seidman, 2008).

But that is only part of the story I wanted to explore. I also wanted to understand how the president translated, or not, these experiences into effective leadership action within his college. Effective leadership action in responding to conflict is best determined by those who are members of the college–the faculty and staff (Birnbaum, 1992). This then requires interviewing faculty and staff, not to learn their meaning-making system (although that is relevant), but to learn about how they interpret the president's actions.

The interviews were conducted over 10 months. I conducted 28 hours of interviews with the president and a total of 17 hours of interviews with supporting research participants. In interviewing supporting research participants I used a semi-structured interview format, but this format was directed not at understanding their inner experiences of conflict, but rather to learn their perceptions of the president's behavior with conflict–what did he do and under what conditions? Through these interviews I was able to draw comparisons between how the president perceives he behaves and how others in his organization perceive those same actions (Appendices F for interview

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protocol; G for letter to research participants/ informed consent form, and H for IRB approval).

Observations. I conducted 11 observations at the school over the period of 10 months. From these observations I was able to gain a feeling for the daily life at the school. To guide my observations, I relied on Lofland and Lofland (1995) *Analyzing Social Settings*. This prepared me to look for scales of behaviors such as small talk in groups, episodes including committee meetings, All-College Forums, roles (both formal and informal leadership roles), social types (individuals who played the roles from school informant to advice givers, quiet observers to outspoken critics). I also developed a "feel" for relationships such as the president's relationship with his senior administrators, with faculty and with staff such as the maintenance workers. The work also alerted me to subcultures which at the school took primarily the form of academic disciplines such as medical and liberal arts; career and technology such as business and computer science, and support faculty in advising and tutoring. I was also able to observe the inter-relationships between these groups to determine if the culture matched self-reports by those whom I interviewed. For a more detailed guide to qualitative observation and analysis see Lofland and Lofland (1995). My observations were recorded in field notes and helped to inform my analysis of the interviews when I reached that phase.

Leadership Development Profile. I used a data instrument known as the Leadership Development Profile (LDP) to provide an external assessment of the president's preferred "actions logics" (the rationale he uses to determine his stage of

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leadership maturational development). The Leadership Development Profile is based on and adapted from the protocol originally developed by Jane Loevinger, (1966; Loevinger & Blasi, 1976), expanded by William Torbert and Susanne Cook-Greuter (Torbert & Associates, 2004). Loevinger and Wessler (1970) introduced measurements to operationalize theories of ego maturity development through the Washington University Sentence Completion Test (WUST). The test measured a framework of meaning making that an individual uses to subjectively organize experience (Hauser, 1976). Torbert and Cook-Greuter updated and expanded the survey to focus on organizational leadership and to capture later stages of ego maturity[8] (Torbert & Associates, 2004).

The Leadership Development Profile consists of 36 sentence completion stems which focus on self-perception, interpersonal relationships and social situations, which might also be described as a process by which an individual reasons, feels and responds (Cook-Greuter & Soulen, 2007). The WUSCT has been refined and validated over 40 years of testing (Gilmore & Durkin, 2001) and is considered one of the most accurate and widely used measures of human development (Bartunek, Gordon, & Weathersby, 1983; Cook-Greuter, 2000). (Appendices I for a history and description of the Leadership Development Profile).

Site Selection and Sampling Decisions

The aim of my research was to understand how a president of a community college handled conflict and how he arrived at those decisions involved in handling conflict.

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[8] Cook-Greuter developed the later stages of ego development through her dissertation for her Ed.D at the Harvard Graduate School of Education

Due to travel limitations, I looked for colleges within the northeastern United States. After researching eight potential college sites, including interviews with the college presidents, I narrowed my selection to one college within my targeted geographic area. This college met my criteria because it was in the midst of a major long-term restructuring that moved the college from a centralized state-controlled governance system to a decentralized system of independent colleges governed by a board of trustees.

Of particular importance for my work, the president of the college I selected for a case study offered me unlimited access to faculty, staff and students. For a period of 10 months, I was also provided access to school archives, including minutes of committee meetings, emails, policy documents such as the school's regional accreditation self-study, and school-system documents. I was also given the opportunity to attend school events and to wander freely about the school. In order to prepare the college personnel for my presence, the president sent out an all-school email explaining my work.

Sampling Decisions. Although my chief focus was on interviewing and observing the president, since he was my unit of analysis, I determined that I needed to understand the organizational cultural environment in which he operated and, since this was a case study, to learn how his colleagues at the school interpreted his actions.

Although sampling decisions technically extend to all data used in my study, I focus here on sampling decisions for individuals selected for interviews. Sampling decisions for other data are described within the data collection section that follows. Since the aim for my research was not to produce a statistical generalization from a

sample population of interest, I used a purposeful sampling technique to select

individuals for interviews, following three goals as suggested by Maxwell (2005)

- Representativeness or typicality of population

- Heterogeneity of population

- Extreme cases, that is, individuals who represented extreme differences in their outlook about the president's response to conflict

Based on these criteria, I selected 13 individuals whom I interviewed over a

period of 10 months. As the chart below shows, my sampling included a range of

positions from senior administrators and department chairs to faculty, and staff.[9]

Table 3: Support Research Participants: Position and Tenure at the College

Interviews by function*		Interviews by years at school *	
Admin	3	More than 20	3
Faculty	9	5 - 10	5
Staff	1	Less than 3	5

* Excluding the president. Parker-Magagna, M., 2012.

I sampled by years at the school, from those with more than 20 years (and who

could talk about the state-controlled governance system) to those with less than three

years (who started after the decentralization and after the president started). In addition, I

selected faculty by academic expertise, which ranged from business, liberal arts, and

general education, to medical technology, nursing, and physical therapies. Two factors

were not sampled for: gender and age. I did not sample by gender because the majority

of senior administrators, faculty, and staff are women. I also noted the age ranges of

those I interviewed but felt that sampling by age was not useful to my study, as the newer

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[9] I originally planned to include students but found that students were not familiar with the president. The college is a commuter-college and the students appear not to have much interaction with him.

faculty were often in the same age range as the tenured faculty. There was not enough of a range to make stratification a viable research option. One final note, since this was a small school, most of the faculty sat on at least two committees, so there was a great deal of interaction among the faculty I interviewed. Finally, some of these interviews resulted from recommendations of participants (my field notes document who recommended whom), but the majority were interviewed based on purposeful demographic sampling.

Purposeful Sampling. I used purposeful sampling in selection of all my data sources, with the exception of the Leadership Development Profile. For example, I attended certain school meetings based on recommendations from those I interviewed. Almost everyone I interviewed recommended the All-College Forums because they had traditionally been a forum for important school-wide issue discussions (and occasional debates) and thereby could provide a flavor of the culture and an overview of the typical approaches to contentious issues.

Selection of documents and artifacts to study was based on initial recommendations from my committee (such as accreditation reports), and my own detective work as my study progressed. For example, when it became clear that valuable insights could be gained by email exchanges between the president and the faculty, I requested and was given access to this information. In correspondence I reviewed between the president and the regional accreditation committee, I found requests for follow-up reports on issues such as shared governance that I thought would be useful. I was given access to these as well.

Data Analysis Strategies

As suggested by Yin (1994), case studies, particularly single case studies, benefit from a conceptual framework to guide research. There are simply so many data methods and so much to study that without some clear analytical direction, the researcher may muck about by gathering too much unusable data—wasting the time of research participants as well as her own time and effort. I chose for my dominant mode of analysis the explanatory mode. My overarching strategy was to compare my data to potential explanations derived from my conceptual frameworks. If the data did not fit or failed to explain in a compelling way, then I adjusted the explanation, explaining the gaps between data and theory. In addition, I chose not to rely on only one explanation for my data, but rather developed rival explanations which grew from the grounded theory approach and development of data themes and categories.

Although I have reported data collection strategies separately from data analysis strategies, this is an artificial distinction. I began data analysis after my first few interviews with the president (whom I interviewed first), and kept a field journal of my analysis.

Process Used for Analysis. The interviews were digitally recorded, then transcribed. I reviewed each transcript against the original digital recording, and then reviewed the transcripts each a total of six times to ensure that I felt comfortable with the material. I then began to build thematic codes by extracting quotes from each document and placing them in a grid. I originally planned to use Nvivo-9 to develop the thematic codes, but determined after an initial workshop with the software that I preferred to

develop my own system. My system enabled me to get "close" to my data by manually bringing transcripts into grids of my own design. The quotes were analyzed against my research questions until I had a "feeling" for some major themes. I began to explore these themes in search of corroborating quotes from interviews. I developed a coding retrieval system which cites the line number and interview transcript, so I can return at any time to find the quote. In two cases, I elected not to transcribe the tape due to lack of relevant interview data, so in those cases, I reviewed the digital recording (which I transferred to computer) and logged the interview quotes by a time code. Therefore, some of my interviews reflected line numbers, while others reflected time codes for location. Also this coding system will allow future researchers to access my data easily, if permission is granted my research participants.

Once I had reviewed the interviews as discussed above, I then combined them with artifacts and documents to review all of them according to the system recommended by Boyatiz (1998) and Charmaz (2004). First, sentences were reviewed for potential relevance to research questions and overall topic. Sentences were coded by descriptors; for example, a description of a decision-making process was termed as "slow," so this was coded "perceived slow decision-making process." Next I combined descriptors that represented themes. In many cases, I had multiple themes for the same group of sentences, and I did not attempt to reduce this number until I had been through the documents and interviews a number of times. Once I had identified the themes that represented key elements of a potential storyline, I then combined themes to see if they made sense as a narrative. At this point, I tried to keep an open mind, and not force themes or theories together.

I followed the research analysis protocol of Boyatiz (1998), because his methodology encompasses both inductive analysis (grounded theory approach), where themes and theories build out of the data, and deductive analysis, where themes are identified out of conceptual frameworks that were brought into the study at the beginning. I used the deductive method to code for two conceptual frameworks that formed the focus for my study: (a) that the president's experiences and responses to conflict reflected a stage of adult development complexity, and (b) that organizational context and culture played a part in how a president/leader responded to conflict, as well as influenced how organizational members (faculty and staff) perceived his responses.

I delayed administering the Leadership Development Profile (LDP) until all of my interviews with the president were completed. I delayed the LDP to prevent the possibility of the results biasing my interviews.

Researcher Role and Ethics

In qualitative studies, the researcher takes on a major role because she not only analyzes the data collected, but also functions as the instrument by which the data are collected. Whether it is the review of documents, the interview of research participants, or observations of events, all these pieces of data are filtered through the framework of the researcher. Therefore, understanding one's role and ethical responsibilities is critical. My stance is focused on four pillars: informed consent, confidentiality, professional integrity, and duty to protect against harm of unintended consequences (Gibson & Brown, 2009). When I initially spoke to the president about this study, I used the IRB document to initiate our discussion of informed consent. I was acutely aware of the risk the president took by agreeing to have his presidency studied to learn more about conflict

responses. We discussed how this would be a "warts and all" study of his processes. He said he agreed to do this study with me because he wanted to help other first-time presidents and, at the same time, to learn more about himself as a leader.

Because my study focused on a small school and this was a sitting president, I determined that I needed to make the work confidential, that is, to hide the identity of my participants. After discussions with the university's director of IRB, I learned that even when study location and participants are masked, confidentiality is not a given and that with diligent and clever work, identities can be uncovered. This is why I determined to situate the community college within a large geographical region and to carefully assess how much I would disclose about the characteristics of the school and the state educational system. In the end, I decided that I had to disclose a good deal about this college's history and relationship with the state government, as this figured prominently into the story.

Those whom I interviewed (whom I called supporting research participants) were uniformly concerned about confidentiality both for themselves and the school. This is why I made the determination that I would use pseudonyms for the president, for the former vice president of academic affairs (to avoid confusion with the current sitting vice president) and for the name of the school. All others are referred to generically as "a faculty member, or an individual, or a person," etc. I consulted several case studies and noted that when the work was treated as confidential, the researchers used generic terms to refer to the quotes from their research participants (Kezar, 2005). The research data was collapsed and coded into themes. In addition, I have tried to be sensitive to the use of key phrases or idiomatic expressions that would identify an interviewee.

Finally, inherent in my work was the ethical requirement to keep confidential all conversations. Having spent more than 20 years in professional consulting, I felt comfortable with a dual role of researcher and participant. As a researcher, I did not discuss my work, except in general terms of current scholarship on the topic of leadership and change with my research participants. As a participant, I mingled with school faculty and staff when I attended meetings and school events. I was fortunate in that my gender and age were quite typical of the school. The majority of students and faculty are women, and as a community college, students range from their early 20s to 60s. So I tended to blend into the demographic mix.

Data storage and management, as noted in the IRB letter of consent, was protected through a three-tiered system. First, I used audio-digital tape recordings, which I had transcribed by a professional firm on the West Coast. These recordings were coded for anonymity. The original audio recordings were kept on a separate flash drive, with an additional electronic backup. I kept a hardcopy document that contained the real names of interviewees and their pseudonyms in a separate location. Only my committee chair and adviser, as noted in the IRB, are privy to where these items are stored.

Validity Issues

Checks and Measures

Prolonged engagement. I spent extended periods with my research participant and supporting research participants. I interviewed research participants as well as observed their work in a group (team effort). I was also assisted by the president and others in the schools in obtaining key documents.

Triangulation. Methodological triangulation is defined by Denzin and Lincoln (1998) as research that involves collection of multiple sources of data. My multiple sources were: interviews, documents which included committee meetings notes, regional accreditation self-report and follow-up emails, documents from the state community college system, the collective bargaining agreement between faculty/staff and the state; emails, and field notes. I used a notebook to record observations, preliminary analytic notes and methodological field notes, which I then transferred to computer based notes and memos. My analytical notes were used later in developing my research results and analysis, and my methodological notes were used to monitor my research process including sources of my personal bias and improvements to my interviewing.

Peer and Expert Debriefing. This process allowed me to expose my work to a disinterested third party who was knowledgeable in the field but unfamiliar with my work and my specific research topic. This allowed me to identify those areas of my research that I had overlooked. I consulted with Dr. Sara Ross, development complexity theorist, a co-author of *Action Inquiry* with William Torbert (Torbert & Associates, 2004) and an expert in analysis of complex issues, conflict, and decision making. As a peer debriefer, I consulted J. Angwerd, a master's student in conflict engagement and a student of development complexity theory.

Member checking: I reviewed my interview findings with each participant. I found that this was a crucial step, not only to correct mistakes or misinterpretations and potential omissions, but also to establish a greater level of trust. I used numerical code

for each research participant, with the exception of the president whose synonym was "Cooper" and the school name "Excel."

The following table provides an overview of the protocol I used to judge the validity of my research work. Construct and internal validity were attended to through multiple uses of data and the ability to triangulate. My research should not be considered as having external validity because my work is of one person, in a specific time and place.

Table 4: Criteria for Quality of Research Design

Tests	Yes/No	Case Study Tactic	Phase of Research In Which Tactic Occurs
Construct validity	yes	-use of multiple sources of evidence -establish chain of evidence -have key informants review draft of case stu report	Data collection Data collection Composition
Internal validity	yes	-pattern-matching -explanation building -time-series analysis (data over 7 time)	Data analysis
External Validity	no	-use replication logic to multiple cases	Research design
Reliability	yes	-use case study protocol (documentation) -develop case study data base	Data collection

Source: Cosmos Corporation as reproduced from *Case study research* (p. 33) by R.K. Yin, 1994, Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage Publications. Copyright Sage Publications (1994). Reprinted with permission

Limitations of Study

The primary limitation of my case study was its external generalizablity. In discussing the issue of generalizablity, Yin (1994) contended that a case study is no less generalizable than a single experiment. An experiment, like a case study, must be replicated and studies are often replicated by studying the same phenomenon under different conditions. Case studies, like experiments, are "generalizable to theoretical propositions, not to populations or universes" (p. 10). In this sense, my case study may

have external generalizablity but I would caution that to do so would require a number of carefully laid qualifications. For example, this is a study of a first-time community college president. The study of a first-time president at a community college has usefulness within the field because, as I argued in Chapter 1, in the upcoming years more than 60% of the current community college presidents will retire, so there should be a fairly large number of first-time community college presidents.

However, since this case was contingent upon context and conditions, any generalizations drawn from my conclusions may be erroneous if applied to another college system or campus with its own unique history, culture and values. In other words, what I found in this case may be helpful in understanding another situation but only if the similarities and differences are carefully noted.

Conditions of change, as found in this case, will certainly be of interest in the future of community college study as the entire community college system nationwide is in various stages of change and transition. Some community college state systems are evolving to a decentralized model as I found in this case, yet other state systems are evolving in the opposite direction–some are moving into more centralized operations. [10] The implications are particularly important when studying the influence of positional power within the community college and its system. Some colleges have strong local control by a board of trustees, while others, like the one in this case, still maintained strong centralized control at a state level as it implemented its decentralization process. This made a critical difference in the power structure at both levels of the college and state in my case study.

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[10] According to my discussions with staff at the American Association of Community Colleges (Washington, DC), this rotation between centralized and decentralized is so continuous that the Association has ceased tracking these occurrences (Wayne Horton, AACC, personal communication, March, 2011).

In addition, the historical conditions under which the college in my study developed over the past 60 years is not typical of development nationally. While most community colleges evolved as junior colleges–an extension of high school–the community college in the geographic area of my study developed in the tradition of vocational career schools. These traditions are very different.

I would be remiss if I failed to point out that the collective bargaining agreements, college personnel policies and articulated policies between the state community college system and the individual college also had a large impact on the way that the business of running a school is conducted. In my study, the faculty had negotiated a role within the governance structure of the college and the state system. This is not the norm, as most collective bargaining agreements do not articulate the governance role of the faculty (Kater & Levin, 2004).

A further limitation for generalizablity is the theoretical lens used in this case. I drew upon the theoretical foundations of organizational leadership which is currently undergoing its own metamorphosis as several strains of research are intersecting at various points, as for example, the theories of chaos and complexity, situational context and cultural leadership. These strains or perspectives which I have referred to in Chapter 2 under a general heading of Cognitive Complexity Theory, included two branches of theory which I referred to as a cultural-relational perspective and an adult learning perspective. As Kezar et al. (2006) pointed out in their extensive review of educational leadership theories, there are no clear lines of demarcation where one line of research in the area of cognitive theory stops and the other begins. In addition, in extending the work of cognitive theory, with its emphasis on mental models which leaders use to decipher

their organizational environments, I additionally introduced and drew upon work in

Constructive Developmental Theory, a branch of adult development psychology which

focused on the maturational (ego maturity) of the leader (Kegan, 1994; Torbert &

Associates, 2004).

The cognitive theories of organization and constructive developmental theories

may not be generalizable when applied to other studies in the form in which they were

used in my study. These theories have rich and varied implications which need to be

studied and understood before application to another study.

CHAPTER IV

RESULTS

Introduction

This chapter begins by describing the history and culture of the campus, and background on the President in order to place my findings within a context for discussion. Part One presents themes and evidence to answer the question: How does President Cooper experience conflict and describe his responses to it? Part Two shows how faculty and staff describe his responses to conflict and discuss not only the manifest conflicts but also the latent ones. Part Three addresses the following question: What relationship, if any, exists between President Cooper's experience of conflict and his stage of leadership development (as measured by the Leadership Development Profile).

Table 5: Excel Community College: Campus History

Date	Event
1960s	Founded as a vocational school
mid-1990s	Merged with anther state community college to form one regional college
2002	Combined colleges receive first regional accreditation as community college
2005	Reorganization results in separation of regional college, Excel returns to independent community college. No permanent president for two years.
2007	State legislation sets up new community college system and creates self-governing Board of Trustees
2007	President Cooper appointed president

Parker-Magagna, M, (2012). Prepared based on data in Excel regional accreditation self-study, 2008

Excel Community College is a small, rural college located in the Northeast, founded in the early 1960s as part of a network of technical and career colleges under the jurisdiction of the state's Department of Education. In the mid-1990s, Excel Community College merged with another technical college in the state to form a regional college with two campuses. A few years later the combined campuses received their first regional accreditation as a community college, rather than technical colleges. In 2005, the state community college network was reorganized again, and Excel Community College was decoupled to become an independent community college. Two years later, the state legislature reorganized the system once again and moved community colleges out of the Department of Education, creating an independent community college system modeled on the higher education system for the four-year colleges and universities in the state. The Board of Trustees was appointed to create new policies and procedures for self-governance and the trustees were granted significant operational autonomy and authority. The state legislature also called for a new emphasis on transfer pathways to four-year degrees while maintaining traditional associate degrees for professional occupations.

Excel Community College serves a student population of approximately 1,000 traditional and adult returning students, mostly female. About 30% of the faculty members have taught at the school for 20 years or more; within the last two years an additional 30% have been hired. The school offers 37 associate degree, diploma, and certificate programs which range from liberal arts and general education to teacher and early childhood education, and from business and computer technologies to criminal justice and human services. However, the school is primarily known for its medical and healthcare programs with an especially strong nursing curriculum.

A Period of Unsettling Shifts

From the mid-1960s to the mid-1990s the college's president and vice president of academic affairs enjoyed exceptionally long tenures. Their thirty year tenures were followed by a brief period of turnover in both positions, followed again by relative stability. However, following the decoupling of the colleges in 2005, Excel experienced a period of turmoil during which it had a series of four presidents, two vice presidents of academic affairs, and several vice presidents of student services. The self-study report to the regional accreditation agency characterized these years as "a period of unprecedented and often unsettling shifts in both [our] leadership and [our] status as a state agency" (Document 14, p. xxx). The self-study prepared by Excel faculty for the regional accreditors also described the current president appointed in 2007, J. Franklin Cooper, as one "who appreciates and encourages [Excel's] communal aspirations, and who is a national leader in the advancement of community colleges" (Document 14, p. xxx).

Despite a heavily autocratic state governance system which existed until the decentralization of the system in 2007, Excel's faculty developed a collegial culture which encouraged faculty and staff to participate in policy decision-making discussions. This allowed for multiple perspectives and diverse approaches to problem solving and it facilitated faculty input into presidential decisions. The school developed a tradition of monthly All-College Forums for the discussion of administrative and management issues. Another governing body, the President's Council, also provided a medium through which faculty and staff could review school-wide issues and make recommendations to the president. Several long-time faculty described the school's culture as one which was based on assessment of outcomes and quality improvement in both teaching and

administration. This development-style culture (Bergquist, 1991) is credited to long-time

faculty leaders who were active in regional and national accreditation and who sought to

move the school toward an "evidence-based" assessment and improvement culture

(150.8.29).

However, despite the collegial atmosphere on campus, Excel's relationship with

the state community college education commissioner[11] and his staff had been contentious.

For most of the school's history, but especially during the 1990s, Excel's liberal arts

faculty worked closely with the state community college commissioners to prepare their

courses for acceptance by four-year colleges. By 2005, national and state trends had

shifted to focus on college access, larger enrollments, and business-like efficiency.

Excel's practices—its protection of small class sizes, a faculty publicly critical of a state

community college mandate that Excel open a new academic center in another part of the

state and its well-known reluctance to teach online courses—helped create a perception

of Excel as the nonconforming, rogue college. The college's inability to attract or keep a

president also added to this reputation.

A New Governance Structure for the State Schools

During his presidential candidacy interviews, J. Franklin Cooper was embraced

by the faculty as a kindred spirit. As one faculty member recalls, "he spoke to us at our

All-College Forum about his philosophy of leadership. We thought it matched ours"

(312.8.29). Cooper articulated a broad vision of community service which focused on

collaboration among the local industries, cities, and towns in Excel's area of service. He

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[11] The state commissioner for community colleges was replaced with a Chancellor when the legislature delegated responsibility to the Board of Trustees.

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also articulated his leadership philosophy as "collegial, and committed to shared governance as it relates to charting our future." He went on to say that he considered himself a "change agent" and "transformative leader who scans the environment for unmet needs, opportunities for partnership and collaboration." He finished by saying that his management style was to lead by example (Document 15, p.1).

Despite Cooper's warm reception by the faculty, he was not the first choice of the newly formed community college system Board of Trustees. The Trustees' first choice accepted the position in the early summer of 2007, but left within two weeks of arriving on campus.[12] The job was then offered to Cooper shortly before the beginning of the fall term in 2007 when a new chancellor for the state's community college system was hired. From the Trustees' perspective, Cooper's strengths in institutional and workforce development were seen as a good fit for the needs of the college, but the system administrative staff had expressed serious reservations about Cooper's ability to keep Excel Community College faculty inline with system policies and to prevent the faculty from publicly challenging system decisions. As President Cooper recalls, in one of his first meetings with the community college system administrative staff, the Vice Chancellor told Cooper that to run Excel Community College effectively, he needed to "put his thumb on the faculty and get them in line" (1247.8.4B). President Cooper vowed to himself that he would "heal the school's relationship with the system" and that he would make evolutionary—not revolutionary—changes at the school (1500.8.11). For

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[12] Little is known about why Cooper's predecessor left after only two weeks on the job. Cooper was told by one source that the new president was unaccustomed to working with a strong faculty-staff union and felt that she would have no power to make changes. Another story that Cooper heard was that his predecessor realized that the presidents had less autonomy and authority than she had been led to believe during the interview process.

instance, Cooper set a goal for himself of establishing a working relationship with local communities, a priority that seemed to have been neglected for many years.

Another challenge that President Cooper faced was related to the community college system itself. The Board of Trustees had been granted broad authority over the new community college system and while the legislation promised self-governance to the colleges that included "greater operational flexibility in matters including capital projects, and college personnel decisions," (p. xxx) the extent of presidential authority and autonomy was still undefined (Document 14). Despite a memorandum outlining in broad terms the responsibilities between the Trustees, the Chancellor and the colleges, which Cooper helped to draft along with his fellow presidents, the boundary lines between presidential authority and system oversight remained murky. At the heart of the shared responsibilities document between the trustees and the presidents, the presidents called for the right to be responsible for developing their own budgets consistent with strategic plans and trustee guidelines—with a specific mention of the control of facilities and resources and hiring authority (Document 6).

Background on President Cooper

President Cooper considered himself a "working class guy" whose father was a janitor and his mother was a self-taught bookkeeper. He recalled that throughout his childhood, the middle class was alien to him and his peers; the white collar world was frequently referred to as "the man" or "the suits"—slang for impersonal autocrats who seemed to have little understanding or concern for the plight of the working class. The Man had control and the working class had none. Cooper vowed as he rose through the ranks of community college work that he would never become "the man." This attitude

plays out in two seminal experiences in his life. The first was when he was in charge of a

community college cooperative education program that lost its funding. He was notified

of the funding loss while on vacation so he could be with his wife who was giving birth

to their first child. Rather than waiting a few days to break the news to his staff, he

insisted on driving back within hours of the birth, to the college and personally met with

each affected person. Cooper recalled: "I felt like I was on pins and needles, looking

them in the face, but I knew I had to do it. Empathy is so important." (7.18).

Later, when Cooper was the media relations director of a community college, a

young boy had suffered brain damage while on a college-sponsored outing. The college

president said to Cooper, "You must protect the president" (7.18. 9). So Cooper faced

the family and national news media alone to protect the President but also to do what he

thought was right. Torn between compassion for the family and legal constraints from

the community college attorneys, Cooper said he "vowed to never walk away or delegate

messy, emotional and painful work to others. It's a matter of principle" (7.18.11).

Shortly afterward, he quit his job because he had lost faith in the president. It was almost

a year before he returned to community college work, this time as a development officer

at another community college.

Cooper's working class roots separated him from those he perceived held power;

a power he would come to hold as the president. This perception of his place within

bureaucratic organizations combined with the two incidents to establish a deep sense of

not just holding and wielding power over others, but using that power in a sensitive and

thoughtful knowing of what it is like to be on the receiving end. He believed that his

employees deserved to hear from him and as their leader he would not send others out to

accept responsibility for him. For Cooper, employees deserved more than a distant, possibly uncaring functionary; yet could he maintain that principled stance of accepting responsibility and facing those to whom he owed a responsibility when confronted with the conflict at Excel?

Overview of Themes

The focus of this study is President Cooper. The study is based on self-reports by President Cooper; interviews with thirteen faculty and staff; a review of school and community college system documents; a review of emails and minutes of Excel community college committee meetings; several site observations including attendance at two All-College meetings and meetings of the faculty forum, the faculty governing body (see Appendix E for a list of research documents).

The following table outlines the major themes for each question.

Table 6: Summary of Themes from Grounded Theory Approach

Question #1:Themes –President's self-report about conflict and conflict strategies	Question #2: Themes – Faculty perceptions of the president's conflict strategies	Question #3: Themes: President's experience of conflict and strategies: Leadership Development Profile
1. Stuck in the Middle	1. Governance Process Curtailed	1. Mindset Dilemmas
2. Disconnect over Meaning of Shared Governance	2. Participatory Decision Making Perceived as a Threat	2. Mutuality Struggles
3. The Demons of Leadership:	3. Risk Avoidance	3.Ambiguity Conundrum
	4. Communications Void	
	5. Problems from the Old System Linger	

Part I: President Cooper Talks about Conflict

Question #1: How does President Cooper describe his experiences with conflict and describe his actions to deal with it?

In this Part, I review President's Cooper's self-reports on his conflicts both intrapersonal and interpersonal which tended to be described as bifurcated choices as he puzzled through issues of authority and autonomy, shared governance and decision making and his emotional responses to the challenges of the job.

Theme #1: Stuck in the Middle

One of the major themes to emerge from my interviews with President Cooper was the confusion of the system's demands upon the seven college system presidents within the state and the contradictions that confusion generated. Cooper recalled that at his first meeting with the college system Board of Trustees as the new president of Excel Community College, he spoke about his vision for a comprehensive community college that would enable transfer to four-year colleges. For more than thirty years, Excel had been a leader in this effort but still largely had a reputation as a career and technical school. Cooper recalls, "[The Board chair's] words were to tone down my rhetoric on academic transfer—and how was I going to fix the school, and what if I didn't? He boxed me in a corner and I said, 'Then you have to fire me'" (28.107A). This encounter shocked him because the recruitment materials for Excel Community College from the trustees had specifically focused on academic transfer and shared governance as two key agenda points for the incoming president. Later, one of his colleagues, a fellow president at another college within the system, clued him in that the trustees' definition of "comprehensive" meant adding another career program such as criminal justice to the

college's health care offerings. Cooper explained that this exchange showed that "the model for a community college in this state is in direct opposition to the definition, role and function of community colleges nationally" (558.8.4A). He realized later that the recruitment materials had been prepared by a professional search association, and the Trustees had signed off without understanding what it meant. There appeared to be a disconnect between the Trustees' and the system presidents' perceptions of their goals.

Ambiguity from the top forced Cooper into a defensive stance. He entered the job of president with a false clarity about the expectations of his role as president. As he tried to reconcile his original expectations with the realities of the role especially with regard to the fluid boundaries between the authority of the presidents and changing expectations of his role, Cooper felt the pressure from above as the tenuous nature of his position (and the other presidents') became clear. He and the other presidents served without contract, and therefore could be fired at will by the Board of Trustees. He faced one of the challenges of leadership and that is how to understand the assumptive world of an organization, which in this case, involved the organizational system of the community colleges and Excel within that system (Schein, 2004).

Cooper's next encounter with the Trustees arrived when the Trustees' Finance Committee discussed class size requirements in the colleges. Excel was singled out for its low class sizes, something that had been a contentious issue between Excel's liberal arts faculty and system administrators for many years. Cooper said the Trustees were about to take a vote mandating larger class sizes for all community colleges in the state system when he reacted dramatically. Cooper assured the Trustees that Excel would raise class

sizes if the Trustees agreed not to mandate class size increases for his fellow presidents.

Cooper recalled:

> I hit my fist on the table and I said, "No, no, you cannot do that." Because I will
> not be responsible for pushing that change on my six peers that are sitting here
> next to me. I'm not going to be the reason why now these six presidents have to
> suffer a trustee mandate and lose that autonomy on their campuses. And I
> thought, well, now, am I going to be kicked out the door?

> You know, at the end of that meeting, you know, I came back here and I did
> increase class sizes but I will tell you something. Two things happened that made
> me just feel a lot better. The Chancellor came out and said, I agree with
> everything you said, he didn't defend me there. He didn't defend me in front of
> everybody and he was like that with me. He would call me and every call he
> would say, I'm with you. And I knew I was doing right by that guy that I reported
> to.

> [Some time later] the Vice-Chancellor of the system thanked me for
> understanding their financial needs and helping to get [Excel] in line with the
> system wishes. [I] suffered a whole lot of pushback, especially from [Zelda
> Thatcher], the vice president for academic affairs at Excel who would lower class
> sizes after I had raised them. (945.10.14)

For a second time Cooper was in conflict with the Board of Trustees. Although

the Chancellor did not intervene publically on Cooper's side, he did support him behind

the scenes–a support system that Cooper would come to rely on. His actions placed

himself once again in the middle of trying to protect other presidents but also trying not

to force his college to conform to a broad-based mandate. Upon returning to his college,

his vice-president pushed back against him. He was left in the middle with no real allies

on either side and nothing substantial accomplished. He pushed back against "the man"

and essentially lost and the people he sought to protect could only see that he failed to

protect them. President Cooper stood stuck in the middle between his system and his

college.

As Cooper attempted to loosen the control of system Trustees and staff over

presidential authority and autonomy, he became increasingly aware that these boundaries

were still fixed in a bureaucratic model of tight centralized control at the state level. The

state system controlled everything, Cooper noted. The college vice presidents, registrars,

and financial aid officers historically reported directly to their counterparts at the state

office, not to their college presidents. The role of the community college presidents had

been to enforce the state policies on their campuses with little authority over their staff.

Breaking his staff's habit of bypassing him in favor of their counterparts in the state

office was extremely difficult, Cooper observed:

> There is a great deal of anxiety created, I tell you, that if you give an individual
> responsibilities and not give them authority to perform those responsibilities, you
> set up the situation for maximum anxiety in that person. And I felt very much
> like that here. I remember saying at a system meeting that if they were going to
> treat us like campus deans, then call us campus deans. (555+ 8.4A)

He recalled that his first experience with the power of the system office staff was when

he submitted a request to hire an additional English faculty at the college[13].

> [The system office] enjoyed an incredible amount of power. It was a rude
> awakening when I asked for an English faculty member and was told by the staff
> (Vice Chancellor and Human Resources Director) that I couldn't have one. I had
> to use the [regional] accreditation review to get one . . . .It was a very rude
> awakening. I mean I had heard about this about the system office authority but
> never experienced it before. (928.8.4A)

The unclear line of authority and autonomy between the colleges and the system was so

pervasive that, according to Cooper, Excel's regional accreditation hung in the balance.

The accreditors were not convinced that Excel could become sufficiently independent

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[13] Previously the system office made all hiring decisions. Under the new independent structure, the line was still murky as to whether a president could hire her/his own faculty or if the system office would determine it.

from the dictates of a state system office in order to effectively set up its own school governance process. Ironically, he noted, the academic standards and performance of the college were never in question; rather, it was the administrative dependence of the school on the political state system that was the concern.

Excel was Cooper's first college presidency. He had been among Excel's top choices for president, and he felt it was a good fit. He was further encouraged when he learned that the new Chancellor and an influential system local trustee agreed that he was the person to facilitate some healing in the relationship between the school and the system (475.9.1).[14] Cooper considered his ability to create and maintain harmonious relationships among warring factions to be his strongest point. He observed that throughout his life he had been able to make friends of "naysayers" by inviting them in and making them part of the fold. He characterized his conflict management style as "soft and persistent" (817.8.4). However, Cooper admitted that he had no idea of the depth of the anger and resentment of the school toward the system.

> My first clue was reading that first iteration of self-study prior to the accreditation coming that first year. I saw how angry the faculty were, very angry at [the system] administration. I found so many of my visits to faculty offices at the school would result in these outpourings of dissatisfaction and feelings of being aggrieved by an autocracy.

> What bothered me was I at first couldn't see a way of addressing them in a decisive and forthright kind of way. And even at first when I thought that I could, I looked at my budget and I went to see the vice Chancellor and said I wanted another liberal arts department faculty member. "Oh, he said, that will never happen here" and I realized, "Oh, I can't do this." So I became very careful of what I could promise. (600.12.6)

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[14] Cooper had been the first choice of the faculty of Excel community college, but not the first choice of the system commissioner, system administrators or majority of the trustees. According to Cooper, the commissioner, administrators and the trustees were looking for a seasoned president who would exercise autocratic control over Excel. When Cooper's predecessor resigned after two weeks, Cooper was hired by the newly appointed Chancellor, with the support of an influential trustee who had served as an interim president at Excel while a search was being conducted.

In addition to the conflicts between the system and Excel, there were many points of tension on campus. The vice president for academic affairs at Excel, Zelda Thatcher, had been accustomed to running the school with an "iron hand" as one faculty recalled. She had held a variety of positions at Excel including chief operating officer of the campus during the regionalization period, then interim president briefly, and then vice president for academic affairs. Cooper recalled that in his second month, the "gang of five" (a term he used to describe a group of tenured, long-time faculty) met with him. "They demanded that I fire two people, one of them being Zelda Thatcher. I agreed with that recommendation (to fire Thatcher), but I refused to fire the other person. I [thought that] I could not have this cabal[15] tell me what to do, because, otherwise I would have been just a figurehead" (910.8.10).

Whereas, he faced pressure from the board on class size and the concept of what constitutes a comprehensive institution, he also faced internal pressures. He was pushed from outside and pulled from inside. Skill was needed to effectively respond to these conflicts to avoid being stuck in the middle.

Zelda Thatcher was described by Cooper and a number of other faculty members as a "rule-bound," "check-list driven," and "autocratic" administrator who was known to play favorites, but she also knew how to work within the state system very well. Zelda Thatcher was accustomed to being in charge. Cooper recalled that when the regional accreditation committee visited the school, the chair of the committee pulled him aside

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[15] Cabal is the term the state system staff had used to describe faculty governance at the school at the time Cooper was hired. The faculty, according to the system staff stories, governed by a collective rather than by presidentially-led bureaucracy. It was also referred to as the "people's college," which seems to have had two connotations: some suggested it was run like a socialist commune, while other stories suggested that the college faculty behaved more like a small liberal arts college faculty than a state-run community college.

and asked, "Who's on first, here?" in reference to Thatcher taking control of the accreditation discussions at the school. Cooper said, "I didn't come in expecting to clean house, but the resistance to change and demands that this person needed to go and the accreditation chair—all persuaded me that I had to move this person along." Cooper said, "Two years into my presidency I was able to move her along [into retirement]" (735. 8.4A).

Cooper also expressed concern about being caught in the middle when the Trustees pushed him to expand Excel's offsite academic center. The school and the system had been at loggerheads for several years over the system's mandate that Excel Community College establish a new academic center to teach classes in the western region of the state, because the Trustees wanted it done without giving the school additional financial resources. Many faculty members at Excel were upset and suspected that it was the state system's way of punishing a recalcitrant school. Cooper recalled that this was a major topic of his job interview at Excel; he said the faculty made it very clear that they expected him to challenge the system regarding this center. "I mean it was a history of mandated policy without explanation, you know, coming from this external entity. [The] system couldn't accept that the people at Excel would even question their policy" (142.9.16). The academic center presented a complicated ambiguous problem. On the one hand, the western region had no community college representation, and therefore many students who might be attending community college were either not going to college or going elsewhere. Yet, on the other hand, Excel's faculty members were concerned that given the small size of their faculty, the geographical distance from this offsite academic center and the lack of additional state resources to fulfill this

mandate left Excel without any good options. Cooper believed in the expansion and wanted to make it successful but also felt conflicted because he felt that it unfair that the school had received no addition funds to execute the project. Cooper recalled, "In my previous employment, the community college faculty within the state system had negotiated huge salary increases to teach more courses; in this state system, they just expected it" (237.8.10). Although Cooper supported the center, he did not mandate that the faculty teach there. Instead, he encouraged and thanked faculty who agreed to teach there. He saw this as evolutionary change and sought to lead by his example of support. Despite the gentle persuasion, Cooper said he took "heat for it" from the school and the system. He recalled:

> [The faculty members were asking,] "How do we hold you accountable? You say you are going to ensure that the resources of this campus will not be diminished by these system mandates to create this presence [at the new academic center]." And in juxtaposition, I would be sitting at the Trustees' meeting, in front of all my peers, having the chair of the Trustees pounding me just like [Excel's] faculty as to how they were going to hold me accountable for ensuring that the academic center got full support. (303.9.16)

Leaders face conflict. Cooper was confronted by the push for adaptation to the external environment of the system, and, at the same time, was being pulled to protect the internal integration of his college from the system. Cooper stood in the middle and did not exhibit strategies designed to move him out of the middle where he would be continually buffeted by pressure from both sides. He remained stuck in the middle from which he could not extricate himself.

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Theme #2: Disconnect over Meaning of Shared Governance

The ongoing debate about what constitutes shared governance between Cooper, his senior administrators and the faculty was perhaps the most significant source of tension for Cooper. Operationally, the school maintained a framework of academic standing committees which have enabled the school to "operate efficiently and productively" (p. 45) during turbulent periods of leadership change (Document 14). For college-wide issues at Excel (issues affecting multiple divisions in the school such as facilities, student affairs, financial aid, etc.), the President's Council had served as an advisory body since it was first established in 2002. Its mission was to provide a forum for "college personnel in a shared-governance model for decision making" (Document 14, p.44). In addition, the All-College Forum, a body established during the school's founding, had been a gathering point for communications as well as a forum for discussion of "policy or procedural changes" (Document 14, p.45).

When Cooper became president, he kept all the committees intact but gradually made some changes in their functions. "I did not add any formal teams to this organization. I think what's happened is I've developed some different expectations of what those teams would do" (487.8.10). Cooper's driving concern was to establish a philosophical understanding of what shared governance at the school would entail. One of his first acts was to give a presentation to an All-College Forum about the principles of the American Association of University Professors on shared governance, which called for faculty to exercise decision-making responsibility for curriculum, subject matter, methods of instruction, and faculty status (Document 16) [16]. He noted:

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[16] However, while Cooper recalls this presentation as one of his first acts as president, it remains unclear at this writing why this presentation or discussion is not recalled by the faculty or staff of Excel whom I

I was really coming from a position that looks at a balance of authorities rather than sharing authority in all areas. I was learning what shared governance meant to me, what shared governance meant to them. The bottom line here was people were looking to get out from under a yoke, really. They were in part looking for somebody who would draw a sword and lead a charge against this oppressive system. (918.8.24)

Cooper noted that he held a similar discussion with the system office staff and pointed out that the presidential recruitment materials had called for community college presidents to "have a commitment to shared governance and a collaborative leadership style that emphasizes collegiality" (Document 16, p.2). Cooper recalled that "there was a lot of rolling of eyes. You don't want to do that, some of the staff said. But I said . . . 'we're going to move to a higher education model'" (8.4.860). "Nobody except the Chancellor had a clue. They were buzz words" (903.8.24).

Shared governance and decision making at Excel proved to be one of the thorniest problems which Cooper faced. In the two subthemes to follow, I explored the ramifications of his decision to form a new bureaucratic layer, which he called his Executive Team, and also explore his approach to what he believed to be inclusive decision making.

Subtheme: Reaction to the Executive Team Formation. Shared governance has not been fully resolved or clarified at Excel as of this writing. It continues as a source of tension for both the faculty and President Cooper. Cooper is frustrated by what he perceives as criticism from faculty over establishing a new governance body known as the president's Executive Team, which is composed of the president and vice presidents

interviewed. One explanation suggested by President Cooper is that All-College Forums are sporadically attended.

for academic affairs, student services, the chief financial officer, and the associate vice president for academic affairs. The Executive Team, which Cooper called his "cabinet," was created in early 2008 when Thatcher, the former vice president for academic affairs, had complained that the President's Council was an inappropriate venue in which to have some discussions that involved human resource issues. The Team, according to its recent description, incorporated a "collaborative approach" (i.e., consensus) to render decisions and confirm policy changes made at lower levels (Document 17, p.2). Cooper expressed dismay at the questions and criticisms about this new team, surmising that it stemmed from the faculty interpreting shared governance as one person, one vote in all matters. As the responses in the next section reflect, the faculty had different concerns. Cooper said:

> You know it had been such an autocratic environment and to counter that the faculty were asking for a well-defined system of roles and responsibilities in decision making, which on one level sounds very prescriptive. [What] I am saying here is [that] a group of faculty [wanted] an open participatory process, but they began approaching it from a very rigid [perspective] and wanting to see their voice defined. (8.9.11)

Subtheme: Inclusion to Exclusion. Except for the tensions over governance, Cooper expressed pride in his inclusive decision-making process. During the first two years of his administration, he involved the entire school in approving a new mission statement. Inclusion was a high priority in developing the strategic plan and Cooper also expanded involvement in the budget review process when the school was asked to make significant budget cuts. "I wanted things vetted," he noted. "And I wanted people including maintenance staff and secretaries and others [to] tell me what they saw that was missing" (542.8.10). But he admitted that he was more guarded about the school budget.

And there are some areas that I'm solely responsible for and will not share, well not completely delegate, you know, and that is budget decisions. So that was hard for me to have to look the faculty and staff in the face and say, no, I won't delegate budget authority—the budget is something I am held accountable for by the Trustees. I can't say to you, you can make these decisions and that I will absolutely hold to them. And that's been a hard part you know, I think more than any part of leadership. Instead I want to share governance but we have to come to terms with what can be shared; my natural inclination is to share, but that is where I have to hold authority. (8.4.863)

At the suggestion of a department chair, he asked for volunteers to form a budget committee. Cooper also brought together faculty and staff who were opinion leaders in the school. He noted:

So, laying out the budget completely, getting their idea, I really feel there's a level of transparency and shared governance here that has been a big sticking point right from the beginning. What the faculty and staff really wanted here in shared governance was, you know, a say in everything. (769.7.18)

He also presented the budget reductions at an All-College Forum, which he admitted made him nervous. He was expecting more "push back" than he got. However, following the meeting, when he started to get calls and emails from the faculty about the budget, he felt they were trying to push him and he took it personally, thinking it was part of the school history of "pushing the president." However, after he shared his concerns with his vice president for academic affairs, she told him he had misunderstood. "Frankly, I did not understand that the urgency, the pushing, was urgency . . . related to how the department chairs ran their departments . . . The All-College Forum budget presentation had been very generalized, on a "macro" level, but the department chairs needed to know specifics about what they could buy" (845.8.24).

The budget process, according to Cooper, also brought to light the lack of clarity regarding the roles of the vice presidents and the president:

Now I am working with our Chancellor in the system office and our local politicians to preserve resources for this college. And I get frustrated at the extent that it seems like our college [Excel] community is coming to me for the micromanaging and I'm feeling like this is what vice presidents need to do. And well that's an area that hasn't been completely clear and then it was immediately exacerbated by this budget issue. (56.8.12)

Theme #3: Demons of Leadership

Cooper reported that he had been excited by the challenge of taking on a college like Excel which was considered by the college system to be a rogue, nonconforming school. Cooper believed his personal qualities of caring and empathy would be able to solve the relationship problem between the two schools. His concern for being liked seemed to interfere with the demands of the job; his need to be seen as a "doer" was frustrated by his relationship with the system. Here I explore four subthemes to exemplify his reports: (a) confidence as a healer is challenged, (b) needing to be liked, (c) feeling like a gelded dragon, (d) conflict response and the self.

Subtheme: Confidence as a Healer is Challenged. Throughout his professional life, Cooper had great success in bringing people together, including finding common ground for conflicting academic factions. As a former development officer at a large community college, Cooper had been a tireless producer of grants and other funding for faculty projects, and he was the "guy who got it" when it came to understanding the role and needs of faculty (620.9.1). He recalled, "I had a history of being a beloved dean and a beloved vice president. And at [former community college where he worked] the President held less stature than I did" (767.9.1). Cooper said he came to Excel with confidence that if anyone could improve the relationship between the school and system,

it was he. He knew from experience that relating to others—experiencing empathy—was a special skill-set.

But despite what he considered to be his best efforts, after the first year he felt he was still not trusted by the faculty at Excel. He was continually questioned and challenged on his actions, particularly the expansion of Excel's academic center, expansion of class sizes, and questions of faculty shared governance. Cooper interpreted this as evidence that he was perceived as the "new boss [who was the] same as the old [autocratic] boss" (1012.9.16). Cooper admitted that he expected to be trusted since he had been the choice of the school. He and the faculty shared a respect for academic work (he was not a businessman like the former interim president who focused on efficiency and the bottom line), and he felt he was willing to "roll up his sleeves" to get the work done. So why was he distrusted? "It's also a matter of wanting to be accepted. You want to be embraced by your peers and you're not. Emotionally I felt distrusted and I wanted to be trusted; I felt [that being] distrusted all the time was my fault" (560.9.16).

Subtheme: Needing to be Liked. Cooper's success over the years, as he noted, had been based on his ability to relate to others and to be persistent until he brought the "naysayers" around. At Excel, it seemed to him that the harder he tried to show his empathy, the less it seemed to work. He frequently referred to wrestling with his need to be liked and his need to not be viewed as autocratic. The following quotes illustrate these points:

> You know, over the years I've had to work on not wanting to or not needing to be liked as much as I do. (959.8.12)

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I make a lot of work for myself trying so hard to—to get to "yes" with people. I don't have to get to "yes" nearly as much as I do. I could just be more autocratic about it and it would not upset the system [office]. (1073.8.12)

It was really shocking to me, and I get it now, given the history of the relationship of the system office with people here, that from day one, people here just couldn't see me–the person. (767.9.1)

I asked him why being seen as autocratic bothered him, and he replied:

I know what the mentality is among people who feel like they're up against the system. I understand how the rank and file distinguishes themselves from the suits. I know this from having been a working class kid. At the [manufacturing] plant, there are the suits and then there are the people on the line. And, I realized at this stage of my life that I just can't go up to somebody and say, oh I'm not really a suit. I can only demonstrate that through action over time. Like people will say oh, okay. You know he isn't an autocrat or he is thoughtful or he is reflective. When I think there was just an expectation that just another autocrat was going to walk in the place. And I constantly was tested. (891.8.12; 918.8.12)

Subtheme : Feeling Like a Gelded Dragon? At the system level, Cooper said he had been an outspoken advocate for the authority and autonomy of presidents. Yet with regard to his willingness to face uncomfortable situations at Excel, he admitted that he has avoided them. For example, over a year ago, he committed to improving the lighting in the parking lot at the school because it was a safety issue; the school holds a number of night classes and the majority of the students are women. Cooper said that he believed that he had the authority to get this done since the presidents control critical maintenance expenditures. However, he soon discovered that the money could not be taken from the critical maintenance budget but rather had to come out of the capital improvement budget controlled by the system office. Despite his efforts to work out a plan, he said "it kept being put on the back burner." He explained, "I told them [at the system office] to get the damn lights fixed. But nothing has happened. I can't stand in front of the faculty and

staff and say to them, 'I don't have the authority to do that. I will look like a gelding"
(179.8.11). A year later, the lighting project was still on hold. President Cooper admitted
that he had still not addressed the issue with faculty and staff.

Cooper also admitted that he doesn't leave his office much when he is at the
school. He said that when he first became president, he made an effort to walk around,
talk with the faculty, and listen to their concerns, but in his second year, he stopped. He
talked about his conflict with himself about his tendency to avoid situations where he
feels he cannot deliver on promises or feels that he has no power to make a difference to
get things done. "There was a period [when] . . . I started secluding myself. I hid away a
little bit because in my walks into classrooms and into faculty offices, I was met with
such barrages [against the system office] and for things I couldn't fix" (1336.8.4A). He
continued with the following observations.

> I wanted to be perceived as an engaged leader who was successful at making
> things better. I wanted it to be better. I very much wanted to be better. Very early
> on, I found myself a little bit between a rock and a hard place. And then you
> know, some felt that because things didn't change real quickly that somehow I
> wasn't advocating strongly enough. I was realizing that to make it work [walking
> around], I couldn't be so close and hands-on. (898.12.6)

He said that he still maintains his open-door policy, but admitted he wasn't "out seeking
the grief" (1087 12.6).

Subtheme: Conflict Response and the Self. Cooper discussed his conflict between
his two self-images: one as thoughtful and reflective and one as a person who is
compelled to respond to confrontations (someone who is not a "wimp"):

> Oh, I get very articulate all of a sudden. And it just wells up. It wells up and it's
> just some of my finest moments. You know, I get articulate. Yeah, but I harness

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it; I intellectualize it a little bit but I get really articulate and yeah, it's a quality that I kind of like about myself. I didn't get into fistfights [as a child] but I got into confrontations on several occasions with bullies where I just left them stunned. (1307.10.14)

He also spoke about the isolation of the job. Like many first-time presidents, he found it hard to find confidantes to help him through the challenges of a new role. He said that he had not sought out his fellow community college presidents as a support group because he did not want others to know the problems he was having at the school. He reported that during the first few years, the presidents were very cautious and suspicious of one anther, and he felt they all were competitive in vying for community college system resources (which he thought had been encouraged under the former centralized system). Under the decentralized system, however, he noted that the Chancellor was encouraging the presidents to discuss their mutual challenges and to become more collaborative. However, Cooper admitted that he was very cautious about discussing his school and seldom did unless it was good news (personal correspondence, May 28, 2012).

Although Cooper has found few other peers with whom to discuss problems, he recalled two people—a former full-time faculty member (now an adjunct) at Excel Community College and the community college system Chancellor—who had helped him through some tough early periods. Of the faculty member, Cooper recalled,

> I was feeling, oh God, is this working? There was no validation for a very long time, except [faculty member and informal leader of the school] who would come in from time to time and talk to me, not to hold my hand, but to talk about issues, and she would say, "Don't worry, you're not in trouble, you won't get a no confidence vote letter." (1014.12.6)

Cooper said he missed [the faculty member], whom he credited with being a rare, articulate and fair spokesperson for issues in the school and with the faculty. "She was unusually clear, so she served as an important informal counsel to me, even though she was my most vocal critic" (1019 .12.6). Of his relationship with the now-retired Chancellor, Cooper said that he never discussed specific issues he was facing at Excel (particularly his difficulty of being accepted as a collaborative rather than autocratic president), but he said that the Chancellor was a constant source of behind-the-scenes support. He recalled one instance where the Chancellor had visited Excel's new academic center and made pointed remarks about the expectations that Excel would grow enrollment there or it would be turned over to another school. This message was sent by an administrator at the school in an email that reached Cooper on a Sunday morning. Cooper explained:

> I'm sitting at my desk at home you know, doing some emailing, and I was just so agitated. I thought I'd call him up. I'd call them at home. It was 10:00 a.m. on a Sunday morning. You know, he burst out laughing. I took a deep breath and realized, ok, you know, because he was laughing at me, that I was calling him on the carpet at 10:00 a.m. on a Sunday morning. But he was actually helping me out because he was running interference for me as the Chancellor with my own faculty. (756.8.24)

Part II: Excel Faculty Talk about President Cooper's Conflict Responses

Question #2: How do the Faculty and Staff of Excel College perceive the actions of President Cooper with regard to conflict?

A president, especially on a small college campus, is seen as the chief strategist for college policies and administrative behavior. President Cooper was no exception. From the moment he first presented his campus agenda during the presidential interview process, Cooper was seen as someone who was going to bring positive change to the

campus by fostering participatory decision making and shared governance. In examining

the faculty and administrations' perceptions of President Cooper's management of

conflict, five major themes emerged: (a) governance process curtailed, (b) participatory

decision making as a threat, (c) risk avoidance, (d) communications void, (e) unaddressed

problems from the old system avoided.

Theme #1: Governance Process Curtailed

Many people recalled that when Cooper began his presidency, he made it clear

that he intended to keep the governance structures and processes in place—he wanted to

initiate change through evolution, not revolution. However, by the end of his first year,

Cooper made what many in the school believed to be an unusual and puzzling move,

especially for a small school. He created a new governance body known as the Executive

Team. This team, as noted earlier, was comprised of Cooper's senior administrators.

This team seemed to offer a direct contradiction to the culture that had been accustomed

to open meetings and direct contact with the president on most policy issues. Cooper's

own response to criticism was one of puzzlement and then annoyance. He noted that

executive management teams were quite common throughout community colleges in the

United States, and he had been a member of an executive team at both of his former

colleges where he had been employed. Nevertheless, this team created a rift between the

president and several of the faculty.

> For about a year he denied that the Executive Team was doing anything other than
> just talking about things, but it became clear after a while that they were also
> making some critical decisions. (112.9.6)

> We have over and over and over again tried to address the Executive Team issue
> within the college so we can make it clear what the heck is happening, that's all.
> (36.10.28)

These comments speak to the confusion and frustration over the role of the Executive Team which changed the pace and rhythm of decision making in a small school because it created a new bureaucratic layer. Three subthemes that emerged were: (a) lack of Sensemaking, (b) transparency tensions, and (c) accountability changes.

Subtheme: Lack of Sensemaking. There was a great deal of confusion as old decision-making frameworks were dismantled and new ones were still coming into place. This confusion created one of the challenges for this new governance body empowered with final decision making authority. In this case, people were unclear about the purpose and functions of the Executive Team. For the first two years of its existence, there were no written protocols or descriptions, and no minutes were issued. This was in direct contradiction to all other governance committees, which published meeting minutes for the school website and print copies for the library. In the third year, a school-wide statement of purpose was created and thereafter, agendas and a few "sketchy notes" (52.10.23) were published for each Executive Team meeting. In addition to the Team's rapid decision-making ability, Cooper explained that some topics were sensitive human resource issues and therefore needed to remain confidential.

However, if rapid response was one of the goals of the team, the strategic planning process, initiated by Cooper in his second year in office, seriously damaged that perception. He appointed a school-wide committee to develop a planning process and this was used as the basis for a retreat with faculty and staff to map out major strategic themes. The process was then turned over to the Executive Team to flesh out the details. The Executive Team took more than one year to roll out the plan, but not before dozens

of iterations were passed back and forth to the faculty. As one administrator noted, faculty expressed frustration, asking "How many times do we need to see this?" and saying "Just get it out!" (35.8.11B). Another faculty member summarized a common concern: "We could have prevented a lot of confusion and a lot of questioning of their ability to lead, if they'd made some decisions, even if they were the wrong decisions" (478.12.21).

Opinions about the Executive Team remained remarkably unchanged after more than four years. Some comments included:

> Decision making goes into a wasteland and just sits there and that is the frustration that people are feeling. (10.28.49)
>
> It still exists, the confusion, annoyance and frustration. (456.12.21)
>
> It's a real bugaboo for everyone. (10.28.47)
>
> Decisions are either very slow in coming, or something that don't get made. (1275.9.15)

Pragmatic views among the faculty were that Cooper's creation of an Executive Team created a narrow "funnel" through which decision making functioned and thereby slowed things down.

> I don't really want to know all the details of what was being discussed, but I would like some things to move forward and I think that's the frustration. So regardless of how they choose to manage their own group dynamic is really up to them as long as they're getting the job done, and I feel as if they're not always getting the job done. (460.12.21)

The slowness of decisions was exacerbated by Cooper's policy of decision-by-consensus for the Executive Team. He intended this process to allow issues to be fully vetted by the

administrators, for no decision to be rendered under duress, and to avoid coalition building within such a small team.

Subtheme: Transparency Tensions. Among some faculty, the Executive Team's lack of transparency was a major concern. Transparency requirements were not documented in school internal governance literature as such, and therefore have been subject to different interpretations. However, the interpretation I gathered in my interviews is that transparency historically meant three things at the school. First, the decision-making process was open; that is, issues were discussed in open meetings. Second, the meetings and decisions were documented in committee minutes that were posted in the library and online for anyone at the school to examine. Third, decisions were explained. "A main feature of this culture was not only documenting for others to see, but also explaining the rationale for the decision," one faculty member explained (8.28.1254). Even former presidents who were known as autocrats appeared to have been consistent in providing transparency about their decisions.

> X [former president], always had some kind of quick administrative get together to make decisions; she was visible about what they were—she would tell us what she wanted to deal with and ask for input. Then if decisions came out that we disagreed with, [at least] we knew the process, there were minutes, and that was okay. (49.10.28)

However, other faculty were less concerned about complete transparency as long as there was a climate of trust.

> Transparency to me means it could be opaque. It doesn't have to be absolutely clear . . . . Even if the transparency was opaque, at least, if I had a leader that I could trust, I would say, "Okay, I can't see it exactly but at least I can kind of see shadows behind the glass. And that's the piece that I think is really the core. We all have a different view of what that transparency needs to be. (592.12.21)

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Subtheme: Accountability Changes. At Excel, accountability was managed

through the documentation of meetings and important conversations. Minutes for

governance committees showed a consistent record of action items with persons to be

responsible and deadlines and one faculty member remarked that "it gave us an easy way

to remember what we had agreed to do" (100.12.21). However, almost everyone I spoke

to said that accountability had slipped. An individual who had worked with President

Cooper observed:

> [President Cooper] has a hard time holding people accountable. He cares about
> people so much that he has a hard time to tell them. He could see that [Zelda
> Thatcher, former academic affairs vice president] was not doing her job so he
> tried to compensate and do her job. But since he doesn't hold people accountable,
> it affects morale. (8.29.time 1:13)

Theme #2: Participatory Decision Making as a Threat

For the first two years, Cooper used the main governing bodies for school-wide

issues as they had always been used. The President's Council (formerly known as the

Campus Leadership Team) was created by a previous interim president to "involve

College personnel in the decision-making process" (Document 14, p.44) by providing

recommendations to the president on key issues (Document 14). Many at the school

perceived that although Cooper had kept the original structure of the Council, he had

changed its functions. This observation was substantiated by my examination of Council

records. In the first two years of Cooper's presidency, the Council's minutes were

action-driven; that is, each topic discussed was followed by an action step and deadline.

However, in the third and fourth years, the minutes reflected discussions that have no

actionable recommendations, and topics and discussions tended to be repetitive

(Document 11). This change may be due to the ways minutes were taken; however, in

my discussions with President Cooper, he confirmed that he had purposively altered the

role of the Council. He recalled that the Council members had "not confronted [him] exactly, but explicitly wanted to know if they were a decision-making body. Cooper said no, the Council was "more a body that filled [him] in on things . . . because it is broadly representative of so many different areas of the college" (134.8.12A). The following quote captures the mood: "I need a meeting that has action items and change. President's Council feels more like a random act of kindness than a productive forum"(169.9.9).

A second area where the governance structure remained in place but the function changed was the All-College Forum, which, as the name implies, brought the entire school together on a monthly basis to discuss policy or procedural changes (Document 11). "When [President Cooper] first came to the College Forum, he used the Forum in the way it had always been used. And he never said, 'We're changing it to another way.' (60.9.2). Another individual noted,

> It's frustrating because it's like a small, mini lecture or update that could be executed via e-mail, rather than saying something like, "I want to make a decision about this [issue]. I want your input." And while he may say sometimes, "What do you think?" there's never that end loop of action that is visible. (254.9.15)

Many faculty felt a sense of confusion over roles and structures. The functions of the two main governing bodies were changed by "fiat," (300.9.7) as one faculty member put it, and a new decision-making body with unclear decision-making boundaries was put in place.

As many individuals pointed out, President Cooper had been a strong advocate and leader in helping to craft the "shared responsibilities" document between the community college presidents and the system Trustees (Document 6). This document had attempted to articulate the presidential lines of authority and autonomy in governance

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their schools—something that had been a source of anxiety for the presidents, as Cooper

recalled (251.8.9A). Faculty at Excel, although not all I spoke with, expressed a similar

concern for spelling out accountability for shared governance and participatory decision

making between the faculty and the president. Cooper characterized the faculty's

concern as "dissonance":

> They want to codify a system of governance, because they had no say under the
> old system. But they want a well-defined system of roles and responsibilities in
> the decision-making process. I see a contradiction in them wanting an "open
> participatory process" and a very rigid definition—wanting their voice in the
> process clearly defined. (11.8.9A)

He believed that he had articulated expected decision-making participation in his

presentation at an All-College Forum [Document 16] on the American Association of

University Professors governance principles. Cooper defined "shared governance" as

leaving to the faculty those issues of curriculum content and pedagogy, while issues of

administrative governance such as the budget and other administrative policies were his

purview. The importance of codifying the school's principles of governance and

participatory decision making were articulated in the following quotes by a faculty

member:

> People are pretty much proceeding on the basis of what they remembered it
> [processes] should be. Some new processes have been refurbished in just this last
> year or so, putting some control back into the processes, but it is still very much
> ad hoc. (165.9.15A)

> An institution that doesn't have any written rules [of governance] is an institution
> that is in danger of losing a great deal of its self-knowledge and its self-
> governance. Without such rules, there are no clear lines of responsibility, and
> therefore no assessment of how things worked out, whether they worked out well
> or otherwise. Right now, it's entirely up to the whim of that higher up, because
> there are so few [written] processes. (210.9.15A)

It's not that we could take away [the president's] ability to decide, but he could decide in opposition to a body below him, he would overrule or whatever it is, but there would be a formal process that would be documented and understood than that to exist in the memory of various people. (203.9.15A)

One faculty member expressed the opinion that "authority's not a bad thing, but you need to know where it comes from and what its limits are and how it is supposed to work. This makes a big difference in how people feel included [in] or excluded from the process" (843.9.15A). Another point of view was that without responsibility or authority, "It makes babies out of people. If they have no actual power, they're then happy to let others do all the work" (1161.9.15B).

The "dissonance," as President Cooper termed it, continues to be a point of contention for some of the faculty. For other faculty, primarily those who come from disciplines or careers outside of academia, codification of a system of governance seemed to be less important. In the medical and business disciplines, for example, lines of authority are taken for granted. As one administrator noted, in business, decisions are made quickly, sometimes by bringing people together, and other times by forming a task force or committee, "But there is no formal system of governance, so to speak, for employees" (251.11.9). Another individual said that although the medical profession is hierarchical in its decision making, decisions are always open to revision if evidence shows that the decision is wrong or inappropriate to the circumstance (254.1.5).

Theme #3: Risk Avoidance

It is clear that people view President Cooper's handling of difficult decisions and events through very different lenses. Some report that he is not a risk-taker. He seems unwilling or unable to make a difficult decision that might lead to failure. Yet others

disagree and cite instances where they brought some thorny issues to Cooper and he was willing to make a tough decision once they had met with him one-on-one, explained the issue, and provided the data to support a recommendation.

One faculty member commented that a leader should be able to communicate information so a common understanding emerges, but "[President Cooper] doesn't demonstrate that ability, for fear, in my opinion, of rocking the boat and unsettling people" (172.9.9). The faculty member observed, "Part of being a leader is knowing that you might fail and owning up that the decision wasn't the best one" (170.9.9). Another noted, "He is not a firm decision-maker; he brings in too many people" (400.11.9). Faculty who had served on a committee to recommend budget cuts expressed disappointment over his reluctance to make decisions. The committee members, including a member who was a finance expert, worked over the summer on their own time to analyze the budget shortfall and offer recommendations for budget reductions. Cooper accepted most of the recommendations and publically praised their work. However, once the acute budget crisis had passed, he failed to follow through on his promise to reinstate the committee to work on long-term budget and financial planning issues. One of the members told me that she had written four emails and had several meetings, but that he would not agree to reinstate the committee: "I met with him, and he said, 'Well, we don't have much of a budget. We're still sorting it out as an Executive Team." She commented that shared decision making means participation and input can not be exercised only in times of crisis (165.12.21).

Generally speaking, Cooper was not seen as someone who felt comfortable making decisions because he was "not comfortable with conflicts, good or bad"

(160.9.15). Others observed that Cooper was simply reacting to the school environment, which was seeing a "challenging situation as negative—especially when it involves a difference of opinions" (179.9.9). Others commented on his willingness to work through issues and make decisions if pressed to do so. For example, one person stated, "I would go in representing the faculty on some real issues, close the door and sit down with him. He was always wonderful in working things out. He can do that stuff. But he loses the priority of doing it unless somebody forces him to do that" (31.10.28). This perspective was also voiced by his senior administrators, one of whom said that "he's not afraid to be responsible for hard decisions. On several occasions he told me to make the decision, and then to tell them it was his decision" (12.23).

Although Cooper seemed willing to exercise authority through intermediaries, he was less decisive when directly involved in difficult situations. Cooper was known as someone "who likes to please" (266.11.3). Many have said that he does not like people to be uncomfortable. When a female staff member experienced a personality conflict with a male who reported to her, Cooper offered to take on the responsibility for supervising the direct report rather than reprimanding him (112.11.19). Cooper was called a "kind person," "authentic—in that what you see is what you get," and his staff said that he was self-reflective and thoughtful. One of his administrators phrased it this way:

> People think that he doesn't like to make the hard decisions and he leaves it to others [to make decisions] too much, so that he doesn't act, but my view is that he likes to please everybody, so he won't necessarily say no to somebody who comes in his office. (19.6.22).

Another individual observed:

> Sometimes he takes criticism personally . . . . I've heard some people say, "I went in and told [President Cooper] that he didn't handle something correctly; [President Cooper] takes it very personally—he gets flushed. And then he shuts down. (55.8.29)

Theme# 4: Communications Void

Cooper was described as a poor communicator. In fact, one of the most problematic issues for many in the school was his ad hoc and "rambling" communications style. Many at the school also reported that they had "no clue" (166.11.30) as to his activities, especially external to Excel community college. Frequently faculty and staff learned about President Cooper's activities by reading it in the local paper or hearing about his activities through their friends. "It makes us feel devalued," one individual commented (51.11.21). Another complained, "It's embarrassing to be in the community and not know what your own president is doing" (62.10.14). In addition, that same "ad hoc" style appeared to be experienced in school meetings. Although President Cooper was aware that he "ought to communicate more," he had not instituted a systematic process to address the problem.

As reported earlier, President Cooper was conflicted about his decreased visibility on campus. On the one hand, he knew he needed to walk around and talk informally with the faculty, but, on the other hand, he justified it as being too busy. His reluctance to walk around the school was noted by faculty with a sense of an annoyance and with a sense of loss.

> He set a framework when he first came in and he followed through on it for a couple of years. And then started to wobble and then he started becoming invisible. I don't want an invisible leader; I can tolerate a wobbly leader but not an invisible one. (10.28.31)

I mean I used to feel I was invading in the last year. Before he had an open door that was truly an open door. (31.10.28)

However, some disagree about what constitutes an appropriate level of access and visibility. "An door open is not access, it's not visibility. I know he thinks so because he's always saying, 'I'm here for you.' And I'm not sure that in his mind, he is" (789.9.15).

Theme #5: Problems from the Old System Linger

One of the lingering problems from the old state system was the inability of Excel Community College to make long-term plans for the future, not only because of a series of interim presidents, but also because the college had been subject to centralized control through the state legislature, particularly regarding budgets. During the years of interim presidents long-term planning had been postponed. When Cooper came to Excel, many in the school saw this as an opportunity to define the school's long-term goals and strategies. But all I spoke with said that long-term planning had never been addressed during Cooper's tenure. His approach was described as short-term thinking and change measured in small increments. Attention to the long-term direction of the school had not been addressed.

One of the most contentious issues that Cooper inherited was how to balance the system's demands for expansion of school services despite scarce faculty resources. The push for expansion included offering more courses at Excel's offsite academic center, increasing class sizes, expanding online learning and expansion in the use of adjunct faculty. Cooper has largely supported expansion but considered faculty resources to meet

those demands to be "academic issues" and deferred decisions for how to accomplish

expansion and class size increases to the vice president for academic affairs.

Part III: Leadership Development Profile Assessment

Question #3: What relationship, if any, exists between the president's experience of conflict and his stage of leadership development?

In this section, I report the findings from the Leadership Development Profile

(LDP) on President Cooper. In his LDP, President Cooper was assessed at an

Individualist stage of leadership maturity. The *Individualist* stage will be described

below using three major themes to organize the discussion. The themes are: (a) mindset

dilemmas, (b) mutuality struggles, and (c) ambiguity conundrum. These themes were

selected because the LDP predicts that an *Individualist* will be caught between two

mindsets, that of the conventional and postconventional thinker. An *Individualist*, while

beginning to truly value relationships and mutuality for their own sake, may also be

confused by too many value choices and unable to choose among them. And finally, an

Individualist may be confused by the ambiguity of situations which require drawing upon

not only rational judgment but also upon reasoning informed by emotions. These three

themes represent new experiences for an *Individualist*. Prior to reviewing these themes,

some background on the LDP helps to provide the context in which the results have been

presented. A review of ego maturity definitions is important to understanding the role of

the LDP in this study.

The Leadership Development Profile is based on the original work of Loevinger

(1976). Loevinger's work measures the human developmental stages toward an

integrated and mature ego which is defined in this study as "development of a more

complex, differentiated and integrated understanding of self and others" while moving away from "self-protective and exploitive attitudes" and toward "self-respect, mutual respect and identity formation" (Oja & Reiman, 2007, p.97). However, as Torbert (Torbert & Associates, 2004) points out, the concepts on which the Leadership Development Profile is based also share much in common with the concepts of Robert Kegan (1994), the developmental psychologist who originated the term "constructive developmentalism." Kegan (1994) contends that ego maturity is both a function of mature thinking and feeling (intrapersonal behavior) and mature relationships with others (interpersonal behavior). The stage of growth toward "mature capacity" (Baxter Magolda, 2004, p. 8) governs the mindset we use in defining and analyzing challenges we face.

In the profile to follow, I compare the predicted behaviors of the LDP for an *Individualist* to President Cooper's self-reported experiences and responses to challenges. Where appropriate, I also provide data from interviews with Excel faculty as to their observations about Cooper's responses to challenges.

Theme #1. Mindset Dilemmas

The transition to an *Individualist* from an earlier stage of *Achiever* is perhaps one of the biggest steps in the complexity stage development journey because it represents a transition in thinking from conventional to postconventional. In the conventional mindset, reality is objective and discoverable. The systematic framework of society's laws and organizational rules are seen as immutable and therefore not questioned. In the postconventional stage one's mindset changes to view reality as socially constructed, with no single "right" or "true" viewpoint. This is a tremendous leap or transformation in

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perspective that causes a re-evaluation of how a person interprets the world. As an

Individualist, Cooper is predicted to recognize multiple viewpoints but sees them all as

relative, with no viewpoint being better or more correct than another. As an *Individualist*

for the first time, Cooper begins to see the complexity and ambiguity of problems, but

has yet to develop a framework for managing those competing complexities. Within a

leadership position this may render the leader unable to make a decision in a timely

fashion–if at all–leaving it to others to make the decisions by default, causing "decision

paralysis" (Torbert & Associates, 2004, p.68). The LDP suggested that Cooper was

showing some thinking attributed to an early *Strategist* stage. In the *Strategist* stage,

Cooper would most likely feel the earlier sense of confusion pass and would learn to

balance competing perspectives by differentiating among them, then integrating them

into a broader, more unified perspective (Torbert & Associates, 2004).

Theme #2. Mutuality Struggles

As an *Individualist,* Cooper is predicted to have a greater capacity for mutuality

with others over his previous stage of the *Achiever*, where self-protection and

achievement were more important than mutual influence and respect. Cooper is learning

a tolerance for intrapersonal conflict by grappling with a newfound discovery of the value

of emotions as a source of data (rendering the rational outlook insufficient). However,

Cooper is also predicted to find interpersonal conflicts (and the complexity of competing

perspectives) a bit overwhelming for him because he has no way to discriminate and

differentiate among these perspectives. However, at this stage, as an *Individualist,*

Cooper would be accepting responsibility for his decisions, unlike his prior stage of the

Achiever who would tend to blame others for problems and conflicts emerging from his

single-minded pursuit of his goals. Cooper wrote in his LDP assessment that his conscience bothered him when on occasion he felt that he had "not owned up" to being disingenuous or not taking responsibility for his actions (Harthill, 2012; Torbert & Associates, 2004). This feeling would not occur to an *Achiever*.

While *Individualists* generally recognize mutuality, they often avoid it because they turn inward, focusing attention on their personal growth, which may appear to others as being egocentric (Cook-Greuter, 2005; Torbert & Associates, 2004). As Cooper admitted (personal correspondence, April 2, 2012), he, like predicted for an *Individualist*, felt he has become less interested in the daily activities of his organization and admitted that he preferred a leadership style which is laissez-faire, leaving others to self-manage and not holding community members accountable for their commitments.

Theme #3. Ambiguity Conundrum

Although Cooper's responses were overwhelmingly from an *Individualist* point of view, a few prompts in the LDP reflected both a later (*Strategist*) and an earlier stage (*Achiever*) of leadership development. For example, reflecting the later stage of a *Strategist,* Cooper's responses to the LDP prompts displayed an appreciation and understanding of multiple perspectives on complex problems, and an ability to manage these complexities. For example, when prompted about the goal of community college education he responded that education should be a "universal right" and "intended for personal growth as well as social mobility." If that prompt had been answered from an *Achiever* point of view, for example, Cooper would have likely responded that the goal of a community college education would be career advancement because *Achievers* focus on goal obtainment. To offer a vantage point on how a leader at the *Individualist*

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development stage might think and behave when compared to an earlier and later stage, I

created the table below to offer a comparison of the three stages. These stages are not

directly correlated to data on Cooper's behavior, but rather offer a general overview of

predicted thinking, feeling and actions based on over 40 years of LDP testing.

Table 7: Comparative Analysis of Three Stages of Leadership Development

Mindset	Strategist	Individualist	Achiever
Awareness of multiple perspectives	Yes	Yes	Limited [a]
Empathy toward multiple perspectives	Yes	Yes	No
Recognition of ill-structured questions	Yes	Limited	No
Reflective work to test own and others assumptions and beliefs	Yes	Limited	No
Seeks and accepts disconfirming feedback about leadership practices	Yes	Limited [b]	Very Limited [c]
Tolerance for ambiguity, complexity and uncertainty	Yes	Very Limited	No
Accepts responsibility for results of own actions	Yes	Yes	Limited [d]

Created by Parker-Magagna, M. (2012) drawing upon the work of Torbert and Associates (2004); [a] An *Achiever* understands that people are different and must to negotiate a compromise to achieve goals, but does not an understand mutuality. [b] *Individualists* are beginning to understand the value of critical feedback (double-loop) but are not yet at the stage where they will seek it out on a regular basis. [c] *Achievers* are usually open to advice (single-loop) to correct their actions needed to achieve their goal. [d] Achievers accept responsibility for their own actions that clearly don't achieve their goals. However, when the goals themselves are the source of the problem, *Achievers* fail to reexamine their goals and instead have tendency to blame others for interfering or thwarting their efforts.

As the Table 7 indicates, an *Individualist* has the capacity to empathize with other

viewpoints, particularly those in conflict with his own, but this position is contradicted by

a tendency to listen but not act; that is, not doing the reflective work of testing his own or

others' assumptions and beliefs. As a result, by paying attention to everything the

Individualist may inadvertently create conflict by his refusal to take a stand or his failure

to engage conflict in a meaningful way. This characteristic of an *Individualist* describes

the reports of Cooper's inability or refusal to take a stand as described by the faculty in

Part II. Since community colleges must operate within increasingly complex

environments that entail many demands and rapid change, this complexity means that

these colleges are facing problems that have moved from well-structured (established and

concrete routines for solving them) to ill-structured (more ambiguous and contradictory

processes)[17] solutions. The cognitive and emotional capacity of the *Individualist* may

still find himself "over his head" (p.10) with the complexity of the environment (Kegan,

1994). Cooper's self-reports about his conflicted feelings over the challenges he faced at

Excel seem to reflect his feelings of "being over his head."

For some at the *Individualist* stage, leadership is more difficult than for others.

For example, some leaders are able to retain the drive and focus of their earlier stages,

and "add" the new dimensions gained by the *Individualist's* perspectives. For these

Individualists, this new stage builds successfully on earlier stages, enabling them to see

leadership through a larger context of decision making than they did at an earlier stage.

This, in turn, may lead toward participatory decision making. But the transition to the

Individualist stage is usually not without personal confusion and less emphasis on goal

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[17] Ill-structured problems have many possible definitions and answers, but even experts disagree (Mitroff & Emshoff, 1979; Oja & Reiman, 2007)

achievement for its own sake. Individualists become more inwardly directed, and develop

a deeper concern for avoiding hypocrisy within themselves and others. They can seem

aloof or unpredictable in their management behavior (Harthill, 2012; Cook-Greuter,

2004; 2005; Torbert & Associates, 2004). In the next chapter, I examine the challenges

of Cooper when seen through the mindset of an Individualist, but also offer some

additional perspectives to help unravel the mystery of his behavior.

Themes Converted Into Findings

So that the reader can easily review the main themes and findings discussed in

this chapter, Table 8 includes representative samples from interviews, observations, and

documents, each with its related theme, research question, finding, and rationale for the

finding. Following this table is a short narrative summary of the three main findings from

data analysis discussed in this chapter.

Table 8: Thematic Code Conversions into Major Findings

Example of support for theme	Theme	Question	Finding	Rationale for finding
After system college presidents successfully negotiated with trustees for more autonomy over campus issues in broad strokes, Cooper failed to cease opportunities to test out new authorities. For example, when trustees pushed Excel to increase class sizes by threatening a system wide mandate, Cooper heatedly responded that his fellow presidents should not be punished and he raised class sizes at Excel. "There is a great deal of anxiety created, I tell you, that if you give an individual responsibilities and not give them authority to perform those responsibilities, you set up the situation for maximum anxiety in that person." (p.9)*	Stuck in the Middle	#1	Hunkering Down	Missed the opportunity for advocating and inquiring (learning) about how trustees saw key issues and to focus on systemic issues behind challenges to college. Tended to look to others to clarify his authority rather than recognizing that authority boundaries (especially during a system transformational change) were fluid and needed to be negotiated..
Cooper did not question the authority of the system administrators. Example: when administrators told Cooper that he couldn't hire for a vacancy (despite adequate funds in his college), he accepted their interpretation. (p. 11)	Stuck in the Middle	#1	Hunkering down	Often accepted problems and solutions as defined by system administrators rather than exploring and challenging their assumptions.
Cooper had promised Excel faculty that expansion of classes at their offsite academic center would be covered by system budget increases. When that did not materialize, Cooper focused on "the heat" he was taking from both the system and the school – did not recognize the academic challenges of stretching the faculty workload or using adjuncts without proper supervision. (p. 12-13)	Stuck in the Middle	#1	Hunkering down	Saw trustees mandate to expand offsite academic center as a non-negotiable demand; unable to build alliances to balance competing demands from system and the school.

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Table 8: Thematic Code Conversion into Major Findings (Continued)

Example of support for theme	Theme	Question	Finding	Rationale for finding
Created new Executive Team which established new layer between Cooper and the faculty –final decisions were filtered through the committee. (pp.15-16) Did not pursue dialogue with faculty to determine common points of agreement over definition of shared governance. (14 -17)	Disconnect over meaning of shared governance	#1	Disengagement	The creation of the new committee created a barrier which cut off informal dialogue and testing of potential options for solutions.
Saw budget as a bifurcated problem – either he was in charge of decision making or the faculty was. Did not seem to recognize collaborative opportunities. (p.16) Equated shared governance as faculty expecting a say in all decisions. (p. 17)	Disconnect over meaning of shared governance	#1	Hunkering Down	Used a bureaucratic framework in analyzing various shared governance opportunities; Cooper left his assumptions untested.
As new president, Cooper pledged shared governance and collaborative leadership based on collegiality, yet failed to seek common ground and buy-in on decisions such as new Executive Team with policymaking authority. (p. 15-16)	Disconnect over meaning of shared governance	#1	Ego fluctuations	Cooper articulated an *Individualist*'s mindset in pledging shared governance but behaved as an *Achiever* in protecting his positional authority (Joiner & Josephs, 2007)
Cooper made promises to fix the parking lot lights. When he was stalled by system administration, Cooper withdrew from informal visits because he "felt like a gelding." (p. 20)	Demons of leadership	#1	Disengagement	Cooper avoided interaction with the faculty by retreating to his office instead of engaging in informal conversations with faculty.
Cooper saw himself as healer and when he felt distrusted vacillated between blaming others and blaming himself (19-20)	Demons of leadership	#1	Ego fluctuations	Blame and shame are characteristic of an Achiever's self-sealing protection against criticism
Needed major external validation and direction for administrative duties.(p.22)	Demons of leadership	#1	Hunkering down	Cooper depended on others to run interference for him

Table 8: Thematic Code Conversion into Major Findings (Continued)

Example of support for theme	Theme	Question	Finding	Rationale for finding
Cooper empowered new Executive Team to make policy decisions but he denied it. (p. 24) Lack of accountability for governance decision follow up and documentation creates decision making chaos. (p. 27-28)	Governance process curtailed	#2	Hunkering Down	Governance decision-making process subverted
Governance structure creates confusion; annoyance and frustration among faculty because of Cooper's inability or unwillingness to clarify role. (pp. 24-25) Major shift away from decision-making transparency. (pp. 26-27)	Governance process curtailed	#2	Disengagement	Cooper failed to explain or create buy-in for his changes to the existing governance structure
Cooper characterized concerns over lack of shared decision making as "dissonance." (p.29) (Cooper noted) "I see a contradiction in them wanting an "open participatory process" and a very rigid definition—wanting their voice in the process clearly defined." (p. 30)	Participatory decision making as threat	#2	Disengagement	Cooper retreated from engaging in open dialogue about shared decision making.
(Faculty said) without clear written rules institution may lose self-knowledge and governance. (p. 30)	Participatory decision making as threat	#2	Hunkering Down	Cooper ignored requests to provide guidance on governance issues
Some saw Cooper as unwilling to make tough; "doesn't want to rock the boat," not willing to risk failure; brings in too many people. (31-33)	Risk Avoidance	#2	Hunkering Down	Cooper avoided risk by avoiding decisions or requiring widespread approval before deciding

Table 8: Thematic Code Conversion into Major Findings (Continued)

Example of support for theme	Theme	Question	Finding	Rationale for finding
Cooper admitted that he likes to please and being well-liked is very important to him; has made decisions on that basis. Took criticisms of decisions personally. (34) Sees "challenging situations as negative –especially when it involves a difference of opinions." (p.32)	Risk avoidance	#2	Ego fluctuations	Here risk avoidance is to avoid being criticized
Cooper stopped talking informally with faculty; seen as "wobbly" and "invisible." (p.34) "An open door is not access, it's not visibility. (p.35) Failed to keep college members informed of his actions external to school (i.e. with community, business partnerships, etc.)	Communications void	#2	Disengagement	Cooper stayed in office which formalized conversations with faculty – they must come to see him, he did not come to see them.
Failed to response to requests for long-term planning, addresses in small increments with no connection to long term plan (p.35)	Unaddressed problems from old system avoided	#2	Hunkering Down	Leadership Development Profile assessment
Test instrument (LDP) predicts fluctuation between convention and postconventional. Conventional represented by failure to question problems as defined by others; failure to question policies or goals as articulated by authority figures. Yet able to see some competing complexities but no framework as yet to manage; overwhelmed by too many choices. (p. 37)	Mindset Dilemmas	#3	Ego Fluctuations	Leadership Development Profile assessment

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Table 8: Thematic Code Conversion into Major Findings (Continued)

Example of support for theme	Theme	Question	Finding	Rationale for finding
Test instrument (LDP) predicts fluctuation Between deflecting conflict by blaming others versus recognizing personal responsibility in conflicts but still unable to fully differentiate among competing perspectives. (p.38)	Mutuality Struggles	#3	Ego Fluctuations	Leadership Development Profile assessment
Test instrument (LDP) predicts Cooper's ability to indentify multiple perspectives (cognitive complexity) and his limited ability to tolerate ambiguity and uncertainty. (p.39) Cooper self-reports anxiety created by uncertainty and ambiguity of unclear positional authority role. (p. 9)	Ambiguity Conundrum	#3	Ego Fluctuations	Leadership Development Profile assessment

* Page numbers cited here refer to page numbers in this dissertation. Table prepared by Martha Parker-Magagna based on research data

Three Findings from Data Collection and Analysis

As noted in this chapter on Results, the following findings are a synthesis of self-reports by President Cooper, combined with those of the faculty, and triangulated with school documents and my onsite observations. As is consistent with a postmodern approach to research, my findings are a synthesis of multiple views of reality and as such are my explanations. My three findings are:

- Disengagement. The president disengaged and insulated himself from receiving disconfirming feedback from the faculty with regard to how he was handling challenges both from those at the school and with the community college system. This then closed off opportunities for mutuality and mutual openness to influence, cutting off an essential avenue for positive conflict engagement. This may be characterized as a form of unproductive coping behavior, where he protected himself from the anxiety of communications interactions but also prevented himself and others from learning opportunities.

- Hunkering Down: President Cooper appeared torn between two cultures: one represented by the community college Trustees and staff, and a second represented by the Excel community college faculty. These cultures exerted force and demand on him, external adaptation and internal integration to resist the external. He appeared to struggle between the two cultures and although he wanted to reconcile them he did not seem to fully recognize the complexity, ambiguity and uncertainty (ill-structured nature of this situation),

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or the ill-structured nature of the problems he and the College faced. He did not use the political or the symbolic frames, which work better in this situation than structural and human resources. Both cultures disagreed on the definition and potential solutions for the problem of their relationship and about the ill-structured challenges facing the school. Cooper's hunkering down limited his cognitive and emotional lens rendering him unable to handle the mental complexities. His hunkering down was also unproductive coping behavior.

- Leadership Development and Ego Fluctuations. President's Cooper's leadership strategies and experiences of conflict as predicted by the Leadership Development Profile (LDP) provided mixed results. Although the LDP predicted that Cooper operated primarily at the level of an *Individualist*, with early signs of a *Strategist*, my data reflected more frequent activity at the stage of an *Achiever* than suggested by the LDP. This led to the development of two alternative explanations. First, President Cooper's strategies reflected an *Individualist*'s mindset, as predicted by the LDP. Second, Cooper's behavior reflected an *Achiever*'s mindset which was induced by stressful circumstances in which he operated, and this second explanation suggested that President Cooper experienced a "fallback" (Torbert, 2004, p. 68) into a prior stage of leadership development. Fallback behavior is most frequently attributed to stressful conditions that exceed one's ability to productively cope.

In the next chapter, I analyze these three findings, offering data from my research to support them. In the final chapter I offer some conclusions, implications for research and suggestions for future study

CHAPTER V

ANALYSIS

Introduction

This chapter presents the findings from my study which was guided by three research

questions:

> 1a. How does the president of a community college which is undergoing many
>
> changes experience conflict?
>
> 1b. What are the president's strategies for responding to conflict?
>
> 2. How do the faculty and staff of the community college perceive the president's
>
> strategies in response to conflict?
>
> 3. What relationship, if any, exists between the president's experience of conflict and
>
> his stage of leadership development?

In this chapter I summarize relevant portions of leadership and conflict research

drawn from Chapter 2, then discuss three core findings which emerged from my analysis

of the research participants' descriptions of conflict within the community college setting.

Summary of Previous Discussion in Chapter 2

Prior research in leadership studies took a functionalist view; there was a truth to

be discovered and leaders were defined by their ability to exercise one-way authority and

avoid disruption to the status quo. Instead of the traditional universal traits and behaviors

as a baseline, scholars in the last decade have turned their attention to leadership as a

relational and interpretative interaction between an organizational leader and

organizational members (Kezar, et al., 2006). The interpretation of leadership by

organizational members has become important to understanding leadership effectiveness,

and this in turn is impacted by the culture, context and conditions in which leadership is

practiced (Birnbaum, 1992; Bolman & Gallos, 2011; 2006).

Vaill (1989) captured the current tenor in leadership studies when he noted that in

leadership today there appear to be no simple problems or single right or wrong answers

but rather complex and novel dilemmas which a leader must contend with. He suggests

that complexity, not simplicity, may have always been the norm but researchers simply

missed or ignored it. For instance, what Wood (1983) defined as ill-structured problems

that is, challenges which "cannot be defined with a high degree of completeness" and

"cannot be solved with a high degree of certainty"(as cited in Oja & Reiman, 2007, p. 92)

were the hallmarks of Cooper's experiences with the community college system and with

Excel Community College.

The role of conflict engagement has only recently begun to receive attention in

leadership studies because of the need for collaborative teamwork. Conflict is the result

of difference, and differences can be constructive and creative ways to develop new

approaches to problems if relationships are grounded in an appreciation of difference,

rather than only similarities. Conflict is neither positive nor negative in itself, rather, it

becomes an extension of the intentions of those involved (Deutsch, 2000a; Pondy, 1992).

Positive conflict engagement is essential to the modern organization, especially within

academia which is based on the notion of free exchange of diverse ideas and an

appreciation of difference (Bolman & Gallos, 2011). Positive conflict engagement, as discussed in Chapter 2, depends on an openness to influence from others (mutuality), as well as reflective work ("bringing closure to situations that are uncertain by evaluating beliefs, assumptions and explanations against existing data and against other plausible interpretations of data," (King & Kitchner, 1994, pp. 6-7 as cited in Oja & Reiman, 2007). The foundation for effective presidencies is the capacity to learn on the job and thereby continuing to improve organizational leadership skills and initiatives to encourage organizational learning (Birnbaum, 1992).

In the analysis which follows, the three findings introduced and explicated in the previous Chapter: a) disengagement, b) hunkering down, and c) ego fluctuations are discussed in relation to the central research questions of this study and their relationship as responses to conflict tensions.

Finding #1: Disengagement

Introduction

Answering questions 1b and 2, President Cooper's strategies for dealing with conflict and latent conflict (tensions) at Excel could be characterized as disengagement through physical and psychological insulation or withdrawal (also known as conflict avoidance). At the college, he habitually withdrew from arduous conversations or avoided them altogether. Conflict avoidance is not a dysfunctional strategy unless it is overused or used for the wrong purposes. For example, conflict avoidance may be an effective choice when an issue is not pressing or important, if the time is not right because tensions have become too high to have a productive conversation or when others will be able to resolve the issue more effectively. However, conflict avoidance also has

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formal settings), but he shut off a prime source for taking the pulse of the school and also

sent a message that some topics were taboo.

Stone et al. (2010) suggest that three of the reasons people shy away from open

dialogues or what they term "difficult conversations" (p. 12) are an unwillingness to test

assumptions (theirs and others), a fear of loss of emotional self-control and extreme

reactions to self-doubt. Unwillingness to test assumptions might also be called the "what

happened" debate because the reality of one person or group faces off against another

either covertly or overtly. In the first instance, we assume our version of the situation is

the one true version, rather than accepting that it is simply one version among several.

When we assume we know the intentions of the other parties in the conflict we are prone

to misinterpretation because others have mixed intentions or intentions that have gone

awry. Often, our own surety of having good intentions blocks our need to hold intentions

(both ours and others) as a "explanation, not a conclusion" (Stone, et al., 2010). For

example, when his efforts to soothe the contentious feelings between the community

college system and Excel were not acknowledged by the faculty and the faculty

continued to complain about their treatment by the system office, Cooper began to

assume that the faculty held him responsible for not mending the situation and took it as a

personal criticism (918.8.24). However, as one faculty member reported, faculty at the

school held much pent-up frustration at the system—but not at Cooper (113.8.29)—and

had Cooper engaged in open dialogue to test assumptions he might have discovered the

discrepancy between his assumptions and the assumptions of the faculty.

In a second example, when Cooper created a new Executive Team and the faculty

complained that it was replacing their traditional system of governance with an extra

bureaucratic layer, Cooper assumed the faculty's intentions were to become equal voting partners on all school decisions thereby usurping his authority as president (918.8.24). Faculty I spoke with said that Cooper was acting as an autocrat because he refused to engage in discussions to clarify the role and responsibilities of this new executive governing committee. The faculty members stated that their goal was to understand this new committee's role and accountability within the governance system (126.9.15b). Once again, if Cooper and the faculty had engaged in open dialogue, assumptions about intentions might have been clarified, thereby avoiding the conflict tensions which later developed over this issue.

The second major block to open dialogue is commonly caused by a fear of losing control of one's feelings and appearing too emotional rather than rational and logical. To leave feelings out of a conversation is "like an opera without music" (Stone, et al., 2010). Generally, leaders have been taught to avoid emotions in tough conversations. As Stone, et al. (2010) pointed out, feelings are usually at the core of difficult conversations, so if feelings are ignored, the latent conflict remains. In addition, feelings have a way of "leaking" (p. 87) into conversations because feelings are a reflection of each person's life experience ("emotional footprint" p. 93). For some expressing anger is acceptable, while admitting shame or failure is not. Conflict will persist where feelings are not addressed (Stone, et al., 2010). *In Getting Together* (Stone, et al., 2010), the authors support the concept of integrating emotions into the reasoning process; emotions can inform and should not overwhelm. For example, Cooper said he had tried to project the image of a president who had the authority and autonomy to make needed changes at the college. The college needed improvements to their parking lot lights, and Cooper had assured

faculty and staff that this would be done within the year. However, after more than a year of delays from the system office, Cooper was told he would have to wait still longer. Instead of talking with the faculty, Cooper avoided the issue and the faculty eventually assumed he categorized it as a low priority. When I probed him about this issue in an interview, Cooper said that he "felt like a gelding" because his self image was of a person who could get things accomplished and rather than enduring the shame of not accomplishing those things, he preferred to ignore the subject (179.8.1).

Disengagement from open dialogue also occurs through perceived threats to self-identity. Few people are immune to an occasional tension-filled conversation which temporarily attacks their self-confidence and causes self-questioning about adequacy, competence or judgment. However, when taken to extremes, self-doubt can lead to self-protective denial of criticisms or to excessive self-blame. With denial, we leave no room for any other reaction than what is positive about us and there simply is no room for negative feedback. For example, in denial, if we base our image of competence as being mistake free and if we get feedback that suggests otherwise, we focus instead on why the assessment is wrong not on how we might learn from the information. Self-doubt can also bring the opposite effect to denial—negative feedback causes an exaggerated feeling of total incompetence and a hopeless feeling that we are never going to improve (Stone, et al., 2010).

President Cooper spoke of both types of responses. For example, when Cooper was criticized for his laissez-faire management style (particularly his failure to hold some faculty and staff accountable for commitments they made), Cooper responded by characterizing the organization as "immature." In a mature organization, he surmised,

people don't need reminders because they should self-manage. In another case, he spoke

again about his anxieties caused by faculty and staff complaints about the community

college system control over their college. Cooper said he felt "overwhelmed" and "like it

was all his fault." He believed that the faculty and staff "couldn't see him as a person,"

and that they saw him as "the man"—the uncaring administrator (819.8.12).

Cooper's reactions are common to almost 50% of college presidents. In one of the

largest longitudinal studies of US college and university presidents (n=762), Birnbaum

(1992) found that the longer presidents–who were rated as average by their faculty and

fellow administrators–were in office, the more they tended to distance themselves from

close interaction with the faculty and the less likely they were to be open to negative

feedback. By contrast, presidents who were judged exemplary by their faculty had

frequent informal interactions with faculty and were perceived to be open to faculty and

staff influence (e.g. faculty and staff opinions were acknowledged during decision

making, although faculty and staff might not necessarily agree with decisions). These

presidents were also perceived to be quick to learn from their mistakes (Birnbaum, 1992).

Sensemaking and Framing

Sensemaking is the act of making meaning out of conversations and events as

filtered through our personal interpretations of past experiences, self-identity, continual

changes in the flow of information and environmental cues and expectations for what

constitutes a credible action. Through this process people not only interprets but adjusts

their thinking and understanding of the world (Lambert, et al., 2002). Framing is the act

of suggesting how events might be interpreted and made sense of (Fairhurst & Sarr,

1996). It is also the process of interpreting situations and events which enable

organizational members to make sense of their role in the organization and the world in which the organization exists. Presidents must be the framers of institutional reality— that is, initiating open discussion about why a decision was made and how it impacts people in the organization (Bolman & Gallos, 2011; Eddy, 2005; Eddy, 2010; Heifetz, et al., 2009; Kezar, et al., 2006). This does not imply that presidents should become a master of propaganda or self-aggrandizement, but rather that they recognize that it is their job to offer a focus and point of view for organizational members about activities which affect their organization. If this is left unattended, then organizational members are left to fill in the blanks using their own frames (Birnbaum, 1992). It is an interactive process and presidents need feedback from campus members because they need to be able to adjust their understanding of events, and to adjust their choices for communications based on this continual feedback. Campus members need the president's input because the president is the chief policymaker for the school. Framing and sensemaking require continuous readjustments because problems arise which need to be discussed and conversations and actions may lead to misinterpretations and latent conflict (Eddy, 2005; Eddy, 2010; Kezar & Eckel, 2002).

Cooper's insulation from informal interaction with the faculty meant that he missed valuable opportunities to frame or interpret his actions to the faculty and staff. This framing could have been crucial to building faculty support for his decisions and would have allowed him to adjust his decisions based on feedback in order to address organizational tensions. For example, President Cooper's disengagement from walking around the school and ceasing to talk informally with faculty and staff adversely impacted his ability to help faculty and staff to make sense of why he created a new

senior level decision-making Executive Team. As noted earlier, to most of the faculty the move appeared to add an unnecessary bureaucratic layer and to be in direct contradiction to the governance decision-making processes already in place. The move created confusion, anxiety and uncertainty among faculty and staff. Without Cooper's assistance in interpreting this action—other than to respond to comments by saying that it had been done in other schools—the faculty was left to make their own interpretations. Cooper's lack of effort to explain or otherwise make sense of his actions was considered by the faculty to be in direct opposition to his promise of participatory decision making which he pledged during his presidential job interviews. Some began to view Cooper as behaving more like an autocratic administrator rather than a collegial president.

If a leader makes significant changes which curtail or change information flows and decision-making processes but fails to take advantage of opportunities to frame the changes, then confusion, doubt, uncertainty build which then lead to tensions and anxiety (Bolman & Gallos, 2011; Kezar, et al., 2006). In order to manage the tensions inherent in any change process, organizational members need opportunities to talk about the changes. This circles back to the original issue of disengagement. Framing is most effective during daily and informal moments, and sensemaking occurs not only at formal events such as school-wide forums or leadership meetings (Bolman & Gallos, 2011; Eddy, 2010; Fairhurst & Sarr, 1996). Leaders who become disconnected from the day-to-day life of the school gradually become seen by faculty and staff as "insular, unapproachable or authoritarian" (p.32) because the distance between president and faculty is already established by hierarchical status differences. Therefore, the president needs to work to create a balanced approach to the school culture (Birnbaum, 1992).

Cooper perceived persistent faculty questioning about the role of the new

Executive Team as a "them versus us" problem. Cooper framed the problem as faculty

"overstepping their bounds" and as "wanting a say in everything" (918.8.24). He also

interpreted faculty persistence as a challenge to his authority and autonomy as president

(926.8.24). The faculty began to look at the Executive Team creation as an example of

Cooper's disregard for faculty voices. As one faculty member commented, the lack of

inclusion in decision making was "treat[ing] us like babies" (11.6.1). However, if

Cooper had tested his assumptions with the faculty, Cooper might have discovered that

his assumption of faculty intentions (desiring one person, one vote) was erroneous and

that he might have used the debate as a learning opportunity by working out a mutually

acceptable solution.

In retrospect, Cooper shut himself off from the disquieting dissonance that is

characteristically part of difficult conversations. In doing so, he cut himself off from the

information flow (including feelings) among faculty and staff that he as a leader needed

in order to successfully negotiate challenges in his organizational environment. Cooper

missed important opportunities to test assumptions (both his and others) and to help

organizational members make sense of his actions while encouraging a collaborative

problem-solving environment.

These two core competencies for conflict engagement discussed in this finding–

open dialogue and sensemaking/framing–offer one lens on President Cooper's strategies

for managing conflict. These core competencies fall under the general function of

communications, which is perhaps one of the most important functions of a president

(Birnbaum, 1992; Bolman & Gallos, 2011). Communications are not limited to writing

and talking but also are represented in behavior (Eddy, 2005). Cooper's disengagement from the faculty of Excel affected two key elements for a positive conflict engagement process. First, by maintaining open "learning" conversations on a regular basis with faculty in order to take the pulse of the school Cooper could have continually tested his own and others' assumptions and points of view, thereby exposing errors and misinterpretations by matching actions to outcomes (Eddy, 2005). Second, through his disengagement, Cooper abdicated his role (Schein, 2004) as the chief interpreter of ambiguous and uncertain events, leaving it to organizational members to "make sense" of events on their own.

Finding #2: Hunkering Down

Introduction

The next finding explores the relationship of the president's organizational behavior to conflict engagement. As a continuation of the previous discussion addressing questions 1b and 2 (Cooper's self-report about his conflict engagement strategies, and the faculty's reports on the same), I argue that Cooper used a narrow cognitive focus in attempting to decipher and address the problems facing the school. He misdiagnosed important and ambiguous problems due to his cognitive perspective and he failed to take into account the critical importance of organizational culture as a medium through which leaders work. By limiting his cognitive perspective he misread the conditions of change at the community college system level and also lost opportunities to lead and use conflict as a learning and problem-solving event. His activities engendered frustration and tension at Excel Community College.

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Cognitive Complexity

Cognitive complexity is the ability to analyze situational choices through a variety of perspectives grounded in time and place (Birnbaum, 1992; Bolman & Deal, 2003; Kezar, et al., 2006). A cognitive frame not only directs us to what we think is worth paying attention to but also acts as a block to other perspectives. Each vantage point is a frame of reference or conceptual map for interpreting situations, problems, and potential solutions (Bolman & Gallos, 2011). Frames are important for understanding the significance of Cooper's choices because they governed both what he did and did not see. Four major cognitive frames undergird the academic environment: bureaucratic, collegial, political and symbolic (Birnbaum, 1992; Bolman & Deal, 1991 ; Bolman & Gallos, 2011).

Community college presidents who see their roles through a bureaucratic lens focus on structure and organization, emphasizing policies, process and established lines of authority. Presidents who use a collegial frame are believers in teams, collective action, open communication and empowerment. They are likely to see themselves as coaches and facilitators for group decision making and often refer to their leadership style as leading by example. Presidents who see their role through a political frame focus on building coalitions for support and decision making, keeping lines of communications open, negotiating compromises and treating conflict as a natural part of the process. Presidents who favor the symbolic frame focus on the culture, values and history of their colleges. They believe their roles are to foster a shared sense of purpose and beliefs among organizational members. As we shall see later, these four frames are also the foundations for understanding academic culture, that is, each frame contributes to what

the school values, the institutional norms and how faculty and staff interpret effective leadership (Bergquist, 1992; Birnbaum, 1992; Bolman & Gallos, 2011).

Each frame offers a different but important perspective for defining and responding to organizational problems. The frames that a president chooses to emphasize also send a signal to organizational members as to what to expect of their president (Bergquist, 1992; Birnbaum, 1992; Bolman & Gallos, 2011). For example, when President Cooper interviewed for his job at Excel Community College, Cooper's administrative platform promised all four frames. He spoke of a collegial approach to governance (shared decision making, leading by example), a political approach (scanning the environment for opportunities, building networks of support), a bureaucratic or managerial approach (referencing his experience and degrees, MBA, Ed.D.) and a symbolic approach (supporting the college's values of transparency, accountability, empowerment and inclusion) (Document 16).

Given the great promise of his presidency, what happened? Cooper appeared to have a good grasp of the context and the culture, yet in less than three years he had "hunkered down," relying almost entirely on a bureaucratic approach. He had lost the confidence of many of the faculty; he felt anxiety-ridden by the demands from both the school and the community college system. I propose that the problems facing the college were far more ambiguous, complex and uncertain than Cooper was prepared for and that while Cooper had a conceptual grasp of the leadership demands of a college president, as a first-time president he had no practical experience and therefore was overwhelmed by

the demands of the job.[19] This is not to say that a first-time president is incapable of

managing leadership complexity. But in order to manage complexity, a leader needs a

multi-frame strategy to effectively manage ill-structured situations and problems. The

challenge of ill-structured problems is not their complexity but the uncertainty of a good

solution. A complex, well-defined problem, for example, would be a logistical question

about the site of a new medical lab for the best environmental advantage, and an expert

environmental architect or engineer would easily be able to solve the problem. But some

problems in organizations cannot be solved with technical expertise because the problems

are both complex and ambiguous, and people cannot agree on how to define the real

problem nor be certain that their proposed solutions will work.

Ambiguous Questions

One of the most contentious issues for Cooper at Excel was his restructuring of

the governance system along more traditional bureaucratic lines. The faculty saw this as

a contradiction to his promise of participatory decision making, although Cooper himself

did not see it that way. Although the previous system was by no stretch of the

imagination a true shared governance (faculty did not participate in decision making on

equal footing with the president), but by faculty accounts, the system enabled faculty to

have input and they felt their voices were heard and respected. As one faculty member

recalled, their former president had always called a quick administrative meeting when

decisions needed to be made and the entire faculty were included. The faculty member

noted that if the former president made decisions with which they disagreed, at least they

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[19] In addition, Cooper built his career in academic development and fund-raising and had no faculty administrative experience. His wife, however, was a long-time faculty member at another college so he had a trusted ally.

were briefed by the president about the reasons for the decision and had been given an opportunity to provide their input (49.10.28).

From the beginning of his presidency, Cooper had promised and appeared to deliver on his collegial approach. During his first two years, when the college was undergoing its first regional accreditation as a community college, Cooper was actively involved in working with faculty and staff on governance issues. For example, he instituted school-wide committees to revise the school mission statement and to outline the college strategic plan. But around the same time, he also began to convene his senior administrators in what he called his Executive Team or president's cabinet for what he termed informal conversations.[20] This did not appear to circumvent normal governance functions until faculty began to see that some critical decisions were being made by the Executive Team and these meetings were not documented, unlike other governance committee meetings. As faculty leaders pressed Cooper to explain the committee's role and function, Cooper denied that it had any function other than to discuss issues.

Although it was within Cooper's prerogative to create new governance structures, the fact that he did not feel obligated to consult the faculty was in direct contradiction to his original pledge. He reported that he believed he had instituted shared governance, but in a form slightly different than the faculty expected. He felt the Executive Team was highly collaborative–decisions were made by consensus among the four top administrators. Cooper was only able (or willing) to see the limitations of his bureaucratic perspective.

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[20] Cooper said that he originally convened the Executive Team in response to pressure from the then senior vice president of academic affairs Zelda Thatcher.

To the rest of the faculty, however, the Executive Team was neither a representation of inclusivity nor fair process. As Birnbaum (2004) pointed out, in normative environments, procedural justice—the process of decision making—is what gives decisions their legitimacy. Although former presidents of Excel made the decisions, they had been highly consultative and faculty felt included in the governance process. Under Cooper's new system, faculty were seldom consulted and felt they had no input into important decisions. The Executive Team was not codified in writing for several years, until a new vice president of academic administration took office and prepared the document. In addition, over several years Cooper changed the role of the President's Council from a body that made recommendations to the president to one that offered informational input with no recommending power. The All-College Forums, under Cooper's leadership, moved from policy discussions to informational announcements, which as one faculty noted, "could have been sent through email" (254.9.5).

In recent years, shared governance in community colleges has become one of the most important ill-structured questions which presidents face. The American Association of Community Colleges recently called for collaborative decision making and shared governance yet few community college presidents and faculty have had experience in this role. Cooper approached this issue with the certitude of a well-defined problem. As the faculty began to push for clarification of their role, Cooper dug in and the issue escalated into tensions between the faculty and Cooper. Instead of exploring the issue (e.g. exploring beliefs and assumptions about shared governance and explaining his beliefs) and using it as a learning opportunity to build a closer relationship with the faculty,

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Cooper interpreted these efforts as pushing for a "rigid system" and wanting "a say in everything" as exemplified by the "one person, one vote" governance process (90.8.9A). From my interviews with Cooper, I deduced that the committee had become the chief decision-making body in slow incremental steps and that its creation was as much a protective (hunkering down) move by Cooper as it was a bureaucratic decision (he claimed that it streamlined the decision-making process). The new committee sheltered him from the anxiety he complained about as discussed in Finding #1.

Expediency or Pedagogy?

Ill-structured problems can seldom be tackled successfully alone and from only one point of view. Because the boundaries or parameters are unclear and the potential solutions equally unclear and uncertain, multiple perspectives are critical (Heifetz, 1994). But with multiple perspectives also comes the need to sort through the underlying values, beliefs and assumptions of those who are trying to solve the problem. For example, when the community college system Trustees mandated that Cooper increase class sizes and step up the expansion of classes at Excel's offsite academic center, the problem was complex and ambiguous. However, both Cooper and the Trustees appeared to approach it as a complex but routine problem (one that has a clear definition and a selection of authoritative solutions) by asking the faculty to do more and perhaps hiring adjuncts to teach. But problems often begin before they present themselves as problems. For example, some faculty questioned why Cooper had not been able to negotiate better terms, some were concerned about unfair workload increases, and some saw it as punishment for being outspoken critics of the system in previous years. Cooper, by contrast, interpreted the problem as compliance with trustee demands. Class size

increases and the expansion were non-negotiable mandates in Cooper's eyes. To solve this problem, according to Cooper, the school had to stretch its resources.

However, as several faculty reported, they saw the issue as more than a resource issue. They believed the Trustees demands called into question fundamental issues about the academic integrity of Excel pedagogy, especially among the liberal arts faculty who were to bear most of the burden. Their pedagogy was based on constructed learning, where a student learned by doing, especially in their composition classes. This was a slower, more labor-intensive method of teaching, but had yielded excellent results in term of student preparation for transfer to four-year colleges.[21] This pedagogy required small class sizes, which was a priority for the faculty. Yet also important to Excel was its mission to enable access to all students regardless of their academic preparation. This meant accommodating more students, increasing enrollments and offering more and larger classes. The conflict between deeply held pedagogical principles of small class sizes and the need for expanded course offerings and class sizes required reflective work, that is, a discussion among faculty and Trustees about their values, beliefs and assumptions in order to reframe the problem so as to include compatible goals from both the school and system Trustees. However, the problem remained fractured between frames: the Trustees' point of view of selling more college credits to produce more income, Cooper's need to comply with the Trustees' demands, and the faculty feeling stretched to do more without adequate attention to pedagogical issues. The core ambiguous, uncertain and complex problem remained unaddressed, which caused

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[21] In several cases, general education and liberal arts studies graduates were able to skip their senior year in college and transfer directly into a Master's program.

frustration, tensions and feelings among faculty of being abandoned to the whims of the system (72.9.1).

Conflict is often embedded in ill-structured questions not only because ill-structured questions have no single right answer but also because the questions themselves are assumed to be well-structured with known solutions that have worked well in the past. If Cooper had been able to tap his wider potential to see these challenges from multiple perspectives and had invited open discussions, rather than "hunkering down," perhaps he might have been able to report a more positive outcome in his relationships with his faculty.

Organizational Culture

Culture has been defined in many ways, from Schein's assessment that it is shared values, beliefs and assumptions (Schein, 2004) to answers to questions like how are things one around here? (Tierney, 2008). From Birnbaum's (1992) study of academic presidents, he concluded that providing interpretations and reflections of events and administrative decisions both within the school and from the external environment is one of the most important roles of a president. When a president fails to perform that function, academic cultures suffer because they are built on principles of mutuality between the faculty and the president. Was Cooper unusually myopic in failing to envision or act upon his multiple roles as a college president? Birnbaum (1992) found that most first-time presidents used only a bureaucratic/managerial frame in understanding their academic role and Bensimon (1989) found that particularly true among first-time community college presidents. As reported in Finding #1, over half of

college presidents have estranged themselves and "hunkered down" within five years of their presidency (Birnbaum, 1992).

Finding #3: Ego Maturity Fluctuations

Introduction

In this discussion, I address questions 1a and 3. To gauge Cooper's stage of leadership development, I used the Leadership Development Profile instrument. The history of its application and validity for measuring leadership were addressed in previous chapters. In this finding, I conclude that the Leadership Development Profile can only partially explain Cooper's self-reports (see Chapter 4, Results). As discussed in the last chapter, President Cooper was profiled at the level of an *Individualist,* with early (emerging) *Strategist* reasoning patterns. This development stage only partially accounts for data drawn from my interviews, emails from Cooper, observations and studies of school documents. Cooper, based on my data, appears to also operate at least some of the time at a development level of an *Achiever*, which would represent a "fallback" (Torbert & Associates, 2004, p. 68) to the previous reasoning stage. In the following analysis, I suggest two alternative explanations for Cooper's experiences and responses to conflict.

Explanation A: *Individualist* Confusion

The following is a brief recap of the *Individualist* mindset profile as it pertains to experiencing conflict. According to the Leadership Development Profile, President Cooper has made the transition from conventional to postconventional action logics. This is a major transformative perspective shift in that reality and truth are no longer seen as objective and waiting to be discovered and are now understood as a social construction with each person bringing their own interpretation. For some *Individualists*, this leads to

confusion and sense of loss as principles which were once seen as immutable are now seen as relative and contingency-based. If all opinions could be right, how does one resolve conflict? In some cases "decision paralysis" (Torbert & Associates, 2004, p. 102) takes hold. At this stage, some *Individualists* may become more interested in their self development than in their professional work (Torbert & Associates, 2004).

Individualists have a number of good leadership qualities. An *Individualist* moves away from an emphasis on achievement and professional accomplishments as a major determinant of self-esteem and begins to look behind the mirror to see herself in terms of the image created and compare it to what the inner person may be. *Individualists*, unlike the earlier *Achiever* stage, become more comfortable with their faults and this extends to a new acceptance of faults in others. *Individualists* are interested not just in what people do but why they do it. An *Individualist* can now take in multiple perspectives, and unlike an earlier stage, the *Individualist* not only knows that different people have different opinions, values, beliefs, but she begins to understand them on a more cognitive and emotional level. This can lead to the growth of empathy, the ability to take on the emotional perspective of another. *Individualists* are not frightened or threatened by difference, but some may be confused by it. With their new-found lens of social constructivism rather than an unquestioning reliance on positivism, an *Individualist* may feel like there are too many ideas to consider and no process in place for how to manage or prioritize those ideas (Cook-Greuter, 2005; Joiner & Josephs, 2007; Torbert, 1987; Torbert & Associates, 2004).

Each stage has a potential for blind spots. Some of the blind spots which were predicted by Cooper's responses, as an *Individualist,* to prompts in the Leadership Development Profile included a tendency not to synthesize disparate pieces of information or ideas, but rather to treat them as separate and distinct variables. Cooper also demonstrated an *Individualist's* propensity to be confused or overwhelmed by ambiguous problems which had no (or too many) authoritative answers from which to choose. He also admitted to not holding people accountable for their commitments and did not actively seek out alternative opinions to test out his own assumptions or the assumptions of others about problems facing the school. The following analysis compares the results of his predicted behavior based on the Leadership Development Profile to actual self-reports of his experiences.

One Variable at a Time. If Cooper is operating at the stage of an *Individualist,* Cooper is likely to identify causes of problems, but only in sections, like pieces of an unassembled puzzle (Harthill LDP, 2012). The ability to hold two diametrically opposed ideas and to see their connectedness is new to someone at the *Individualist* stage. An example of how this exemplifies Cooper's idea of management is his response to faculty requests to develop a process for shared governance. Cooper recalled that the faculty wanted an "open participatory process, but they began approaching it from a very rigid [perspective] wanting to see their voice defined" (8.9.11). Cooper did not appear to connect the idea of creating a process with the content of having some sort of a voice in decision making. Cooper repeatedly interpreted the faculty's request for a process and clarification of their role as their expectation that they "would have a say in everything" (769.7.18.11). He did not understand the faculty's purpose in wanting assurance of

inclusion in participatory decision making because he was solely focused on what he assumed the form of that inclusion to be (i.e. a formal process of checks and balances). *Individualists* tend to limit the variables (i.e. pieces of information they can't understand or coordinate by missing the point).[22]

This is rather ironic given that Cooper was involved in the same struggle for clarification of his own autonomy and authority with the Board of Trustees. On several occasions he spoke about his anxiety in his role as a president in not having a clearly articulated agreement with the Trustees as to his rights and responsibilities. "There is a great deal of anxiety created, I tell you, that if you give an individual responsibilities and not give them authority to perform those responsibilities, you set up the situation for maximum anxiety in that person"(555.8.4A). Cooper interpreted his personal dilemma from both a cognitive and emotional perspective, but he seemed unable to have empathy (emotional perspective taking) for the faculty. Complex and ambiguous ideas are recognized by Cooper but processed as separate and unconnected elements. One might argue that he was still using a linear reasoning process

Decisions under Ambiguity and Uncertainty. Characteristic of some leaders at the *Individualist* stage, decision making is made more difficult because the old sureties, based in a belief of objective reality, are no longer relevant. The *Individualist* looks at reality as a social construction but has yet to develop a full set of operating principles to handle the influx of new perspectives. Relativity overtakes objectivity and may lead to emotional and cognitive confusion (Cook-Greuter, 2005; Torbert & Associates, 2004). The change is particularly difficult for leaders who are asked to make complex decisions

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[22] Although as I will discuss in the next segment, the *Achiever* does this habitually.

under conditions of ambiguity and uncertainty, as Cooper was asked to do. As president he tried to mediate the contentious relationship between the school and the system—with both sides taking the stand that they were right and the other side was wrong. Cooper, in this *Individualist* stage, was stuck in the middle; he could see the merit in both sides, but had yet to question the underlying assumptions of both sides, and to explore the values, beliefs and assumptions of each that would be critical to turn the "them vs. us" into a mutual problem to be solved.

For example, Cooper supported the expansion of the offsite academic center and had promised the faculty that the center would not take resources away from Excel's main campus. He recalled that the faculty kept pushing him to clarify how he would ensure that resources were not diminished, and, at the same time, the Trustees were demanding that he ensure that the academic center got full support. He felt caught in the middle. He could see the merits of both sides, but he did not attempt to sort out the underlying assumptions behind each position. As a result, Cooper encouraged the faculty to volunteer to teach at the new center but did not require it, and reported (with pride) that he publically thanked each faculty member who had volunteered (303.9.16). This strategy led to tensions in the school because some felt that he had reneged on his promises. Others saw it as being "wishy-washy" and that Cooper needed to be stronger in declaring a position (2.11.9.11).

However, Cooper was not universally seen as a decision avoider. A faculty member who almost unanimously was considered to be the informal leader of the school reported that she found he was not afraid to make the difficult decisions. She described several occasions when she met with him and she said, "Once I laid out the issues and

explained them, he was always very good about making a decision" (31.10.38). A possible explanation is that the faculty member may have organized, prioritized and explained the implications of the issues so that Cooper felt confident making a decision. This would be consistent with the behavior of an *Individualist* who is aware of complex issues but has not yet figured out how to sort competing positions to make a decision (Torbert & Associates, 2004).

Accountability Issues. In reviewing the description of an *Individualist* which I supplied to him, (Harthill Consulting Ltd, 2012), Cooper wrote to me that some of the statements resonated with him. For example, he admitted that he was reluctant to judge others, even when behaviors might seem border line unethical to others, because he believed that there were many different valid opinions to be tolerated. He characterized himself as someone better prepared to run a mature organization, which he defined as organizational members who are willing and able to direct themselves with only occasional coaching from the president (Cooper, personal correspondence, 3.2.12). This is typically described as a "laissez-faire" leadership style (Goethals, Sorenson, & Burns, 2004). This style has led to several tensions in the school. For example, Excel's culture was reflected in the principles of faculty accountability. The faculty was required to file minutes of governance meetings in a timely manner for access online and through printed copies in the library. This policy was the linchpin for tracking decisions and measuring outcomes. Otherwise, as one faculty told me, "we won't remember who was responsible for what and things wouldn't get done. This is an easy reminder system" (26.3.10.12). Traditionally the president, as the final authority, would intervene if a committee lagged

too far behind. However, Cooper never exerted any pressure on anyone to file reports, which led to a belief that Cooper was not concerned with accountability (113.8.29). This perceived lack of accountability carried over to other issues with his performance, according to some faculty. For example, in response to the successful work of a faculty-staff led budget committee which provided ideas and strategies for needed budget reductions, Cooper had promised to reconvene the committee as a long-term financial planning advisory body. However, despite emails and meetings from the faculty to show their interest and urge action, Cooper continually postponed making a decision, citing a variety of reasons including that the Executive Team was still sorting things out. Although these excuses were accepted for a period of time, as one faculty explained, it became clear that he had no intention of continuing the budget committee, but he failed to follow up or explain why (115.9.15).

Tug Between Unilateral and Collaborative Thinking. Although an *Individualist* seeks to move towards collaboration in decision making and team efforts, collaboration is often not clearly defined in the *Individualist's* own mind. For some, it is tapping creative potential to tackle tough problems as a team, listening to a variety of diverse viewpoints and trying to orchestrate a group decision by consensus (also known as the cooperative model of problem-solving).[23] When an *Individualist* is feeling confident, he may try on different ideas and enjoy the new sense of importance as a leader in problem-solving, rather than a being an independent problem-solver (relying only on his internal voice for

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[23] I make the distinction between collaborative and cooperative to make the point that cooperative problem-solving does not try to address underlying differences, i.e. conflicts among parties, but agrees to put them aside in favor of solving a problem. Collaborative uses differences to stimulate getting problems on the table for discussion and works to find a solution that meets the interests of all parties (Wilkinson, 2002).

decision making). For other *Individualists,* the new awareness many spark the feeling of futility in trying to focus and direct problem-solving because many solutions could do just as well because nothing is certain (Cook-Greuter, 2005; Joiner & Josephs, 2007; Torbert & Associates, 2004). In these circumstances, problem-solving tends to "just happen" or evolves from a cooperative process but rarely a collaborative one (Wilkinson, 2006).

Individualists may also be self-authoring, that is, they have a tendency to consult themselves as the final authority (rather than including the views of others). Consulting with others seems more of a double check but not a reexamination of their definition of the problem or proposed solutions for the problem (Joiner & Josephs, 2007). They are generally not team players. This reflects the unilateral thinking of *Individualists,* which is more apparent in the earlier stage of *Achievers,* which I will address in the next section.

Cooper seemed to reflect this tug-of-war between the unilateral and the collaborative. On the one hand, during Cooper's first year and a half he actively encouraged participation by the entire school in the development of an updated mission statement and strategic plan. He was also actively involved in department chair meetings, as well as the President's Council and All-College Forums. Yet he became less collaborative, or so it seemed, when he created the Executive Team as the highest oversight committee in the school. Although he was aware of the faculty's concerns about the Executive Team, he dismissed the concerns without initiating an open dialogue with them. As a result, the faculty saw Cooper as not only uncollaborative but also autocratic in having made the decision and implementing it without any discussion with the faculty. In addition, Cooper's reconfiguration of governance processes—leaving the

structure in place but changing bit by bit the functions, for example, when he changed the

President's Council from a decision making/recommending body to an informational

discussion group—was in direct contradiction to his stated philosophy of creating a

participatory, collaborative decision-making process at Excel (Document, 16; interview

8.10.11). From Cooper's perspective, however, the Executive Team was participatory,

but on a different scale. He cut the number of participants to four chief administrators,

and his meeting style with them was built on cooperation and consensus. In my

conversations with Cooper, he said he could not understand why the faculty objected to

the Executive Team.

Explanation B: Achiever "Fallback"

Introduction. In this section, I explore another explanation based on adult

complexity theory which suggests that a "fallback" (Torbert & Associates, 2004, p. 68)

may have occurred with President Cooper. The previous explanation examined President

Cooper's experience and strategies toward conflict through the lens of an *Individualist*.

The *Individualist* mindset provided insight into his accountability issues, his swings from

unilateral to collaborative-type behavior, his difficulty with sorting out complex and

ambiguous ideas and connecting these ideas into a coherent whole. However, there are

certain experiences and strategies that Cooper and/or the faculty described that do not fit

the profile of an *Individualist*. Cooper's self-reports appear to reflect the developmental

profile of an earlier leadership stage, and in the case of his insulation or disengagement

from interaction with the faculty, his actions may reflect a retreat to one or two stages

earlier. Fallback is the state of a person literally retreating into an earlier form of

thinking and behavior. The fallback is temporary (Torbert & Associates, 2004) and

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usually occurs when a person is in a very stressful environment, feels overwhelmed and reverts (Torbert & Associates, 2004).[24]

President Cooper often expressed his anxiety about the Excel environment during our interviews. He used terms such as "highly stressful, "much more than I had bargained for," "have developed a thick skin," (102-125.7.15). Based on these conversations, and the results as reported in Chapter 4, I determined that it would be appropriate to develop a second explanation to explore President Cooper's conflict experiences. Unless otherwise indicated, I am exploring President Cooper's behavior as a fallback to the earlier developmental stage of an *Achiever*.

Blame and Shame. In reviewing the data, President Cooper on several occasions made reference to situations which could best be described as blame and shame. For example, when referring to faculty and staff questions about his role with the system office, he called it "constant testing" (100.8.12). He equated it to being blamed (lumped in) with former presidents of the school who were seen as autocrats (109.8.12). Cooper could not conceptually separate his role as president from his role as a person. He recalled, "It was really shocking to me . . . that people here just couldn't see me– the person" (890.8.12). This conceptual pattern is reflective of an *Achiever* mental framework. An *Achiever* can not separate himself from his role. This is because an *Achiever* is still at the conventional logic stage where one's identity (intrapersonal self) is

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[24] Another approach to fallback might be better termed "intentional fallback" which is when a person chooses to operate at an earlier stage because he thinks the situation calls for it (J. Amgwerd, personal notes from Torbert lecture, 2012, Anaheim, California). I chose not to explore the intentional fallback because based on my conversations with President Cooper I saw no evidence of this. Also, the literature does not provide a sense of the duration of "temporary."

still embedded in external, rather than internal, self-approval. Conventional logic creates a self-sealing system for the *Achiever*. The *Achiever* does not realize that he is the architect of his own system but rather thinks of himself as a player within a master system of which he is a part. As an *Achiever*, the focus is still very much on the self rather than others, and the definition of self is in terms of achievement of goals and ideals (Cook-Greuter, 2000; 2005; Joiner & Josephs, 2007; Torbert, 1987).

The focus on achievements also has implications for why Cooper chose to disengage from informal walks around the school when he felt that he was blamed for not fixing the problems between the school and the community college system. "I wanted to be perceived as an engaged leader who was successful at making things better" (898.12.16). An *Achiever* feels shame or guilt for not fulfilling their ideals and goals. This may help to explain why Cooper said that when things with the system were not improving he felt he was being blamed for not "advocating strongly enough" (880.12.16) and that it was "all [his] fault" (900.12.16). When he promised to improve the parking lot lights at the school and was delayed by system bureaucracy, Cooper recalled that he could not face telling faculty and staff about yet another delay because he said that if he told them that he didn't have the authority (and autonomy) to improve the lighting, he would "look like a gelding" (179.8.11). If Cooper's experiences and behavior are considered through the lens of an *Achiever*, then it would make sense that he would feel deep shame and guilt because he could not distinguish between failing to deliver on certain goals and failing as a person and professional. This might explain why he said that he began avoiding situations where he thought he might be asked about things he had

no power to change. At an *Achiever* stage the ego is still too fragile to separate out one's

perception of self worth from one's actions (Torbert, 1987).

This is not to say that as a leader develops maturity in the role that these feelings

go away. But the difference is that an *Achiever's* need to produce visible achievements

so outweighs other cognitive and emotional processes that an *Achiever* can become his

own worst critic and obstacle to success. Yet what keeps an *Achiever* from changing

(and protects him from change) is his strong ability to deflect critical feedback that

disagrees with his self-image (Torbert & Associates, 2004). An *Achiever* is good at

"single-loop learning" (Argyris, 1977), that is, a willingness to change behavior in the

service of obtaining his goals. Cooper's disengagement from the faculty and avoidance

of potentially embarrassing situations may be explained by an *Achiever's* approach.

Stuck in Own Assumptions. Another consistent characteristic that surfaced in my

interviews with President Cooper was his propensity not to question assumptions,

whether they belonged to him or others. For example, Cooper admitted that he never

pursued in-depth conversations with the faculty to uncover why they saw shared

governance so differently, or if they saw it so differently. According to faculty

interviews, it seems that their views of shared governance were far less rigid than Cooper

imagined. The faculty wanted to participate, but they were not expecting a "one person,

one vote" (122.8.9) on all administrative matters nor were they attempting to override the

president. As one faculty leader told me, the faculty wanted to codify a system that

would clarify their participatory role regardless of who served as president. The faculty

wanted to be able to weigh in on matters that affected them through a process of faculty

recommendations made to the president. "That way," one faculty member said, "if the president vetoes the recommendation, it is on the record. There is no confusion as to who did what" (200.9.15A). Although Cooper never indicated that he intended to dominate administrative decision making, his comments throughout our interviews indicated that he was concerned about being dominated by the faculty. In one of our first interviews, he said that the previous president had stayed less than two weeks before resigning,[25] and another president had narrowly escaped a no-confidence vote by the faculty.[26] Cooper described the faculty as having the "habit of pushing the president," (255.1.5). When recalling his meeting with the tenured faculty and what he recalls as "demands" for some people to be fired, he noted, "I couldn't have this cabal telling me what to do otherwise I would be a figurehead" (910.8.10). The decision was based on a reaction to protect his positional authority rather than an examination of the merits. Cooper, if seeing the situation through an *Achiever's* mindset, would have likely seen the issue as an either/or situation, that is, confrontation or avoidance or accomodation—and he chose avoidance (Torbert, 1987).

If Cooper operated in the mindset of an *Achiever*, then he may have already made up his mind and drawn the boundaries between himself and the faculty over the governance issue. An *Achiever*, as part of his cognitive/emotional protection, will deflect information that doesn't fit their understanding of reality. *Achievers* are wedded to their positions as the right position and view other positions simply as wrong. However, they are pragmatic and will negotiate their position to accomplish their goals but they do not

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[25] The popular rumor, Cooper told me, was that the president left because she was afraid of the power of the faculty, as well as the restrictions of the collective bargaining agreement.

[26] A no-confidence vote would have no legal impact, but would have been publically embarrassing to the president.

negotiate to examine the potential subjective flaws underlying their own assumptions because they don't see that they have any assumptions (Cook-Greuter, 2005; Joiner & Josephs, 2007; Torbert, 1987).

Also, if operating as an *Achiever,* Cooper may have seen the faculty emphasis on shared governance and decision making as egotistical on their part. *"Achievers* think they are above egotism which they define [egotists] as anyone who is not helping them to achieve organizational goals. *Achievers* think they are without ego because their entire framework is built on what they perceive to be selfless service to their goals and ideals (Torbert, 1987).

Unilateral vs. Collaborative Attitude. As discussed earlier, an *Individualist* has moved closer to a positive approach toward conflict in that they are curious about what others think, are open to new information and like to have lots of options. However, the *Individualist's* curiosity is still in a precarious balance with the need for autonomy, defined as a freedom from control by others. For an *Individualist* to enter into collaborative problem solving is very difficult because in true collaborative work interdependence is essential (Deutsch, 2000a; Torbert & Associates, 2004).

Being adjacent stages, the *Achiever* and the *Individualist* share some of their approaches and concerns about power and control (Sara Ross, personal correspondence, May 5, 2012). In numerous studies of leadership based on adult development theory, researchers found that *Achievers* use a "mystery-mastery" interpersonal style (Torbert, 1987) in which they focus on goals at the expense of process (mystery) and focus on mastery of their own objectives through unilateral control (or attempt to use unilateral

control) of their situations (Torbert, 1987; Torbert & Associates, 2004). They habitually minimize negative feelings even as situations become polarized because they interpret other's responses as a cue to modify their tactics but not their assumptions because assumptions are seen as fact (Torbert, 1987). In conflict negotiations an *Achiever* will resist what they perceive is another person's attempt at unilateral control. An *Achiever* is neither inclined nor competent to question the validity of the framework itself, or to reframe his approach to it (Torbert, 1987). If Cooper's response to conflict tensions such as shared governance or the expansion of the academic center were to be analyzed from an *Achiever's* point of view, then it would make sense that Cooper did not question his own assumptions. *Achievers* are not so much power-hungry as they are protective about infringement on their authority and control by others, which may sometimes manifest as what appears as authority and control over others (Torbert, 1987).

Concluding Remarks for the Three Findings:

In finding #1, Cooper's disengagement from interaction with the faculty cut off a communications flow essential for effective leadership. One of the most important functions of a leader, if not the most important function, is to communicate openly with organizational members and to help organizational members make sense of administrative actions within the larger context of their organization and their external environment. Making sense requires the leader to frame the actions to give meaning and purpose, rather than to let them languish as random acts of decision making.

In Finding #2, Cooper's hunkering down (narrowing his cognitive interpretation of challenges facing the school and the community college system) had a chilling effect on the ability of the faculty and staff to work productively with Cooper to address the

complex and ambiguous problems facing the school. By eschewing the social and cultural dynamics of the school, including values of inclusion, transparency and empowerment, Cooper exacerbated tensions rather than eased them. Cooper's predilection for avoiding tough decisions may have been a result of his lack of experience with ill-structured problems, particularly his tendency to apply formulaic, routine solutions in situations calling for reflective work and cognitive complexity. Additionally, productive conflict engagement requires a sense of legitimacy that processes are fair for resolving difficult issues and problems, and Cooper's alteration of governance was not considered in keeping with fairness standards in the Excel culture. His behavior contradicted his espoused values and this called into his question his credibility.

In finding #3, President Cooper's strategic choices for conflict engagement reflected two different mindsets—an *Individualist* and an *Achiever*. From the *Individualist* perspective, Cooper articulated in his interviews a philosophy of leadership which had moved away from professional achievement as his measure of his self-worth to a focus on his journey inward. But the journey inward, as he acknowledged, made him less interested in the day-to-day issues facing the school and made him somewhat aloof and uninvolved. At the *Achiever* level, again from interviews, Cooper appeared to wrestle with the need to hold power and control as a hedge against losing his cherished autonomy, and to insulate himself against outside opinions which might contradict his self-image and identity.

President Cooper appeared torn between two worlds—the world of conventional reasoning which viewed reality as objective and a postconventional world in which reality was seen as socially constructed, and therefore relative, not fixed or certain. If he

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were operating through the *Achiever* framework, he would have most likely treated

problems and conflicts as bifurcated choices (as for example, his fear about faculty

controlling important policy decisions, rather than viewing faculty concerns as an

opportunity for collaboration). If operating through the *Individualist's* framework,

Cooper would have most likely seen many different options for resolving conflicts, but

been unable to make a choice because everything seemed relative, with one choice being

as good as another. As an *Achiever*, Cooper exhibited some of the mystery/mastery

(Torbert, 1987) documented in research studies of managers who were at the *Achiever*

stage, where *Achievers* may articulate goals for their organizations, but consistently fail

to share strategies, thereby leaving colleagues in the dark. As an *Individualist*, Cooper

exhibited some of the idiosyncratic behavior (changing his decisions without notice) and

lack of holding self or others accountable for follow-through (Joiner & Josephs, 2007;

Torbert & Associates, 2004).

In the next chapter, I review implications and conclusions for theory and practice

in educational leadership, conflict engagement and for leadership training and education I

then discuss the limitations of the study and recommendations for future research.

CHAPTER VI

IMPLICATIONS AND CONCLUSIONS

In this final chapter, I explore the implications and conclusions of my three

findings for the theory and practice of conflict engagement leadership within the setting

of a community college. Each finding is then applied to the scholarly conversations in

community college leadership theory and practice. Finally, I offer recommendations for

applications of my findings to leadership practice and professional training programs for

community college leaders, and some concluding remarks.

Finding One. Disengagement

The finding of Disengagement has several implications for the field of conflict

and leadership. For example, community college presidents are increasingly facing novel

challenges in working with a variety of external stakeholders such as the Board of

Trustees, state legislatures, and community college system administrators. These

challenges may create tensions for presidents particularly for ambiguous and complex

issues which require balancing the needs of the system with those of the community

college. However, when leaders retreat and keep silent, choosing to grapple with these

problems on their own and attempting to make unilateral decisions rather than engaging

in conversations with their faculty, leaders run the risk of appearing aloof, not respecting

mutuality and creating conflict tensions. By avoiding open dialogue (clarifying and frank

discussions) with faculty, leaders may fail to gather important feedback on problems

facing the school but also fail to gather critical information necessary to understand how best to communicate with organizational members.

Disengagement can result in a real or perceived failure to exercise responsibility as an organizational leader which is to help members make sense of administrative actions and of their roles within the larger context of their external environment (Birnbaum, 1992). By choosing to disengage from open dialogue and sensemaking activities, a leader may close off opportunities for mutuality (openness to mutual influence between the faculty and himself), which, in turn, cut off an essential avenue for positive conflict engagement.

A leader's choices in responding to conflict tensions may create a domino effect. By being cloistered away from the faculty, a leader may have fewer opportunities to keep faculty informed about his actions or to discuss the ramifications of those actions. This, in turn, may create the impression that the leader does not value transparency and the leaders does not feel accountable to anyone other than the higher authority of the Board of Trustees. Since transparency and personal accountability are core cultural values of academia, by failing to acknowledge these values, a leader may send a message that the organizational culture and the meaning that members derive from that culture are unimportant to president (Birnbaum, 1992; Bolman & Deal, 2003). Disengagement can be interpreted by one's faculty and staff as a rejection of the interdependence of their relationship–that is, by failing to demonstrate respect for the importance of mutuality between an organizational leader and organizational members, a leader may eschew the social dynamics within the school environment. This creates, rather than abates, conflict tensions.

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Disengagement also has implications for the credibility of a leader. For example, if a presidential candidate espouses the values of collaboration, as Cooper did when he interviewed for the job, then disengages and fails to discuss the reasons for this change of behavior, this sends a signal that the president can not be depended upon to follow through on promises. This in turn creates confusion and uncertainty which can fuel conflict tensions about whether a leader can be trusted. The point here is that leadership is not a solitary, unilateral act. As Birnbaum (1992) points out leadership is a relational, contextual act, and therefore decisions need to be negotiated with organizational members.

Disengagement also suggests implications for the importance of context on leadership. Leaders, like Cooper, might indeed act in a collaborative way when they feel they are in an emotionally safe environment. Yet in community college leadership practice, presidents seldom have the luxury of tightly controlling their communications or contextual environments. As Birnbaum (1992), Bolman and Gallos (2011), Heifetz (1994), Bolman and Deal (2003), and others point out, successful presidents must be able to operate in dynamic, chaotic environments in which conflicting interests both internal and external to the college must be juggled into order to protect and advance the interests of the organization.

Although I explore the psychological implications of community college leadership behavior in more detail in the other findings, I think it is worth noting that leaders like Cooper may demonstrate coping behavior which might be considered as an attempt to control the context in which they practice leadership. Coping behavior may in some circumstances be a healthy response to overwhelming feelings caused by

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uncertainty and complexity (interpersonal or intrapersonal), and provide the needed

psychological space to regain composure (Bion, 1984; McCallum, 2008). However,

when coping results in habitual retreat back into an emotional comfort zone, the response

reflects a pattern of conflict avoidance which shuts off the psychological dissonance

essential for ego maturity growth (Kegan, 1994; Torbert & Associates, 2004). This in

turn cuts off learning on the job which is essential to successful leadership (Amey, 2005;

Lambert, et al., 2002)

Sanctuary and refuge are not the places from which a leader can exercise

leadership. Disengagement in this case study did not resolve conflict; it exacerbated

conflict. The problems that existed outside the president's office could only be solved by

the president stepping outside his office to engage, learn, reflect with significant others

and peers and mutually plan responses.

Fit with the scholarly literature. In conflict theory literature, Deutsch's (1949)

theory of positive conflict engagement posits that, in order for conflict to be productive,

three conditions are necessary: effective communications based on mutual influence; a

willingness to work together to solve the problem; and the willingness and capacity to

define a conflict as a mutual problem to be solved, not a problem of them versus us.

When President Cooper spoke about the issues of shared governance at Excel College, he

framed it as a "them vs. us" problem. My findings contribute to this theory by

reinforcing that active and open engagement in communications, as Deutsch predicted, is

critically importance in productive conflict engagement. Cooper disengaged from

communications, distancing himself from open conversations which were essential to

defining the problems facing the school such as teaching loads, class sizes, and shared governance. Although there are thousands of case studies on conflict theory and practice, my study is the first to focus on the issue through the perspective of a leader in a community college and triangulated through interviews with faculty and supporting documents.

My research also contributes to the literature on community college leadership, especially the work of Eddy (2003, 2005) who has conducted extensive research on the role of communications framing and sensemaking as critical components for successful community college presidencies. In her 2003 study, Eddy found that informal conversations with faculty were keys to community college presidents being able to make sense of potentially tense situations and, in turn, to their ability to interpret and suggest meanings to campus members. Eddy concluded, as I did, that the dynamic environment of community colleges requires presidents to learn on the job and to make adjustments. Critical feedback is essential to presidents in order to identify mismatches between their framing and campus members' sensemaking, so adjustments could be made (Eddy, 2003). In her 2010 study of nine college presidents, Eddy found that framing performed an essential governing function in that presidents framed a vision of the future (e.g., helping college faculty and staff to make sense of administrative changes), provided immediate feedback on actions to achieve institutional goals, and served as a bridge to encourage two-way communication through dialogue and learning conversations between the president and campus members. This in turn, helped to create a collegial atmosphere important to good faculty-president relations. My research results point out that, when the all-important communication tools are ignored by a community college president, the

organization lacks a cohesiveness because meaning making is left to faculty to figure out on their own (Eddy, 2010).

My findings about the importance of Sensemaking/meaning making extends the work of Kezar and Eckel (2002) who studied the effects of presidential change leadership across six college campuses over two years. They concluded that Sensemaking, led by the president, was one of the most critical skills in academic change, particularly deep transformational change. They also found as an unexpected outcome of their research that, when changes were not understood by campus members, the opportunity to engage in open, frank dialogue (i.e., questioning the purpose and function, beliefs, assumptions of the changes) proved an effective strategy for turning negative resistance into positive conflict engagement.

In regard to my finding about the effects of President Cooper's insulation from conflict (disengagement) by denying its existence, this supports Birnbaum's (1992) research (n=762) that presidents who self-seal against disconfirming evidence will also seal themselves off from being able to learn what they need to do to exercise effective leadership. It also confirms Birnbaum's (1992) theory that creating an emotional distance from the faculty decreases faculty perceptions of presidential effectiveness while increasing tensions between the two. Open dialogue is a key component to successful conflict resolution. Without it, decision making by the president is seen as exclusive rather than inclusive and devoid of reciprocal influence between the president and the faculty—essential for a good working relationship.

Finding Two. Hunkering Down

As the results of this case study suggest, when a leader hunkers down he uses a narrow cognitive focus when assessing the problems facing a school. A narrow focus as Birnbaum (1992) pointed out, is almost always the use of a traditional bureaucratic perspective. This perspective, in turn, frames potential solutions only in terms of managerial solutions which focus on replacing people, changing policies and altering reporting functions. Hunkering down creates a myopic frame for leadership.

Another implication of this study is that hunkering down comes into play when a leader, as in Cooper's case, appeared unable to make leadership decisions which involved risk or uncertainty. Reluctance to make decisions where the outcomes are not clearly known and success is not assured may lead some presidents to depend excessively on external validation from those in authority (e.g. a chancellor or a board of trustees).

The context under which hunkering down may take place has interesting implications for leadership. For example, Cooper faced problems which had no generally accepted "right" or "good" solutions. When Excel faculty expanded offerings at the off-site academic center in order to meet the educational needs of students in that geographic area, the faculty did so by increasing their workload and at the risk of overstraining their available resources. When Excel was asked to increase class sizes, the faculty faced challenges to their pedagogy which had emphasized small class sizes. These were ambiguous and complex problems with no easy or one right solution. These challenges reflected many of the same challenges which contemporary community college presidents face today. Problems are new and ambiguous, decisions are risky. Yet as Heifetz (1994) has pointed out, ambiguous, complex problems are often not recognized

as such and instead are diagnosed as complex but routine–that is the leader assumes that a solution exists somewhere which has worked successfully in the past. Fullan (1982) has termed this as "false clarity" where a leader identifies a problem and solution which turns out to be the wrong problem, the wrong definition of the problem, or an ill-suited solution. The problem-solving process for ambiguous, complex problems requires input from multiple perspectives and a willingness to uncover and challenge assumptions about the problem in order to enable novel ideas to be matched to the problem.

Intertwined with a leader's approach to complex, ambiguous problems may be the leader's lack of previous experience and practical training for the role of a community college president. Again, as an example, Cooper was a first time president, with no direct experience with academic matters. His career was built on an expertise in fund raising and development and he had not taught nor participated in the academic decision-making process. Although he was highly educated (MBA and Ed.D), Cooper lacked the on-the-job experience in an academic post. Most of what he knew about academic leadership he learned as a member of the president's Executive Team in his previous position at a small community college. Increasingly, with the impending retirement of more than half of the current community college presidents in the United States within the next few years, a new generation of presidents will enter into the crucible of leadership for the first time. Given that most first time presidents will face increasingly complex, ambiguous problems, the potential frequency of hunkering down as a leadership response may be on the rise. The implications of this finding are that when presidents feel overwhelmed and unprepared for the challenges, hunkering down may become a more common response.

As Heifetz (1994) has pointed out, leadership requires the ability to learn from criticism that comes with the position of leading. With a note of humor he observed that the Indo-European root for leader was the title given to the person who carried the flag into battle and subsequently usually the first person to get killed.

Kegan (1994) referred to situations similar to those that Cooper and first-time presidents encounter as the " hidden graduate curriculum of life" (p. 287). He contended that for most of us contemporary responsibilities are "over our heads" for the emotional and cognitive judgments that are required on a daily basis. He also suggested that much of the leadership training for educators is just that–skills training but not leadership education for development.

These observations which link Cooper's conflict avoidance to his lack of previous academic or presidential experience is not to suggest that only seasoned presidents should be hired or that only those who have been academics can do the job successfully. Rather these observations are to suggest that when a person is entering a highly complicated environment and with a minimum amount of practical experience for that environment, the qualities of leadership maturational level become critically important. The ability to open oneself to disconfirming feedback and willingness to withstand the inevitable blows to one's ego are important for any leader but particularly so for those who are venturing in for the first time.

Fit with the scholarly literature. My findings provide in-the-field evidence to support the theory that a limited cognitive frame may damage the relationship between a president and his/her campus members and create conflict rather than productively engage in

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conflict. Birnbaum (1992) found that presidents who were rated by their faculties as either failed or average presidents had disengaged from disconfirming feedback (my Finding #1); in addition, they were also judged to have used only one or two cognitive approaches to analyzing the needs of the campus, causing tensions between faculty and president, and causing the president to lose the trust and confidence of the faculty (Birnbaum,1992). Most first-time presidents were seen as adopting a positional authority approach consistent with a bureaucratic cognitive frame.

My work also supports the work of Bolman and Gallos (2011) who contended that leaders in higher education need to use multiple perspectives or frames to provide effective leadership because the complexity and ambiguity of problems facing a college campus could not be adequately addressed without multiple ways of interpreting problems and exploring solutions. In addition, my analysis and conclusion that Cooper lacked the capacity to engage ambiguous and complex problems because he used a limited cognitive lens to identify conflict problems and potential solutions is supported by the work of Mitroff and Emshoff (1979) in their examination of ill-structured problems. Mitroff and Emshoff argued that "conflict, assumption surfacing and assumption challenging are central to solving ill-structured problems" (1979, p. 3). They contended that conflict is an essential catalyst for surfacing multiple perspectives which, in turn, challenge assumptions that might lead to ineffective solutions. Multiple perspectives act as challenges to routine, formulaic problem assessments and solutions. Multiple perspectives help to dispel complacency where people assume that what has been done in the past seems to work well enough (Schein, 1982).

At Excel Community College, for example, trustee demands for an increase in class sizes and concurrently for an expansion of course offerings to an offsite academic center reflected a complex and ambiguous problem. Neither Cooper, nor the faculty, nor the system Board of Trustees could clearly agree on the definition of the problem or agree on a proposed strategy for a solution.

Finding Three. Ego Maturity Fluctuations

The Leadership Development Profile (LDP) is an instrument used to measure the degree of mature capacity, the cognitive and emotional complexity which incorporates both an integrated and a differentiated understanding of one's own needs and the needs of others. Stages of emotional and cognitive complexity or action logics, the reasoning pattern people use to make choices about their actions (Torbert & Associates, 2004) may explain significant portions of the emotional struggles which leaders face at certain stage of complexity stage development.

For example, reflective of an *Individualist* stage of leadership development, a community college president who has entered this stage may experience a disorienting realization which accompanies the transition from conventional to postconventional reasoning. In this major shift, reality and truth are no longer seen as objective–out there to be discovered–but rather as a co-construction with others. As leaders at *Individualist* stage have self-reported, they can see many sides of an issue, so it may become very difficult for them to make choices and decide on one course of action. Yet if a leader also reports tendencies reflective of an earlier stage of an *Achiever* (who accepts without question the goals set by superiors), leaders may find themselves adjusting their behaviors but never questioning the overall goals–even when they need to. This may

lead to blindly following a course of action that leads to unpleasant or disastrous unintended consequences.

The implications of ego fluctuations as a finding of this case may suggest that leaders, as seen from the perspective of adult development, may, like Cooper, be struggling with shifts in mindsets that come with leadership learning and growth. If for example, a leader struggled with the confusion of an *Individualist*, the leader might flounder about, appearing indecisive, because there would appear many possible right answers to complex ambiguous problems. Yet at this stage, a leader may not have developed the capacity to make decisions under conditions of uncertainty because there are simply too many choices, all of which appeared equally plausible.

Another implication of ego fluctuation points to the possibility that leaders, like Cooper, may experience emotionally induced "fallback" to an earlier stage of action logics of an *Achiever*. As an *Achiever*, a leader reverts to using a mindset which sees problems having very clear boundaries—with the boundaries defined by others. An *Achiever*'s action logic stage is still embedded in external approval rather than in internal self-approval. Consider a president who, on the one hand, is experiencing the shift to postconventional thinking—realizing the validity of many points of view—yet finds himself also reacting to challenges by retreating back to conventional thinking and its narrow frame of references. Ego fluctuations may help to explain emotional stresses that leaders face as they grapple with different competing mindsets. Stage complexity theory helps to explain what may appear to be leadership inconsistencies, and by offering another viewpoint, this is the value of the theory.

<u>Fit with the scholarly literature.</u> With the exception of Amey (2005), little

attention has been paid to the connection between community college presidents and their

leadership maturational levels. Amey argued that presidents must learn on the job and

that learning as leaders develops through three stages. In the first stage, a president will

rely on top down communications and resolve conflict by relying on positional authority.

In stage two, the president becomes more facilitative, but still retains positional power for

most decision making and takes a mediator position for resolving conflict–choosing

among alternatives. At the third level, the president is highly collaborative and sees the

role as co-creating solutions to problems with others, continually learning and growing

on the job. Applied to conflict resolution, at the third level, presidents do not attempt to

"resolve" conflicts as much as they might guide learning conversations in which the

members themselves develop their own solutions to problems. My work adds to this

scholarly conversation in two ways. First, Amey's work was theoretical, drawing from

earlier work by Kuhnert and Lewis (1989) on maturational levels of corporate leaders and

their use of transformational and transactional approaches. My work is case based and,

as a field study, provides data to support Amey's theory. The data from my study support

Amey's prediction that the more mature capacity (ego maturity) demonstrated by the

leader, the less directive and more collaborative the leader's engagement of conflict

issues. My findings suggest that conflict avoidance is an important variable to be

considered and, to date, has not been studied within the three stages of leadership

development as conceived by Amey (2005).

Eigel and Kuhnert (2005), in their study of 21 senior officers in multi-billon dollar

public companies, found discernable differences in conflict management methods

between those at the *Achiever/Individualist* developmental level and those at the

Strategist level.[27] *Achievers/Individualists* focused on the importance of controlling

conflict rather than engaging with it, while *Strategists*, by comparison, reported that they

saw conflict as a positive and desirable element in organizational culture and said their

aim was to learn from conflict, and, as such, they tried to create environments where

disagreements could be aired without risk to those involved. Joiner and Josephs (2007)

reported that leaders at the ego maturity level of *Achievers* or earlier tended toward

extreme reactions to conflict—either being habitually assertive or accommodating. They

contended that, with maturity, leaders' responses to conflict are more measured,

considered, and balanced. President Cooper, as a habitual conflict avoider on his campus

and a conflict accommodator with the system office and trustees, reflected an Achiever's

see-saw approach to conflict response.

In addition, my research answers Eigel and Kuhnert's (2005) call for further

research that would study developmental levels of the "leader-in-the-environment"

because their work had, to date, been conducted only through self-reports and interviews

of "leader and the environment" (p. 380). In addition, my data support their prediction

that leaders below the Strategist stage are more likely to be influenced by the context or

environment of their work—either positively or negatively—while *Strategists* would be

able to perform at a high level regardless of the context. Cooper self-reported that the

environment of both Excel Community College and the larger external environment of

the college system had a very "stressful" impact on him (pp. 9, 13).

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[27] Eigel and Kuhnert used the terminology developed by Kegan and Lahey (2009). To remain consistent, I have interpolated their stage 4 as Achiever, a 4(5) as an Individualist and their stage 5 as Strategist based on Torbert 2004. The correlation between Kegan's stage 5 and strategist are generally agreed upon by researchers in both traditions, but Kegan differentiates stages by numbers, so an Achiever might be not quite a Stage 4, while an Individualist might be just beyond a Stage 4.

One of the most interesting findings to emerge from my work was the tendency of Cooper to treat conflict problems not as systemic or interconnected but as isolated episodic events. My research findings confirmed and supported the findings of Merron, Fisher and Torbert, (1987) who found that leaders in stages earlier than the *Individualist* stage viewed problems as isolated events, accepted the problem as defined by others (rather than attempt to question the given definition of the problem), and failed to investigate the underlying causes. At a later stage (presumably at the *Strategist* stage), leaders were more likely to question the definition of the problem, the underlying assumptions and treat the problem as symptomatic of other problematic issues.

My work also supported the work of and Rooke and Torbert (2005) and Torbert (Torbert & Associates, 2004) who found that, at the *Achiever* and *Individualist* stages, leaders tended to focus on rational, linear problem solving. They were willing to alter their behaviors to achieve their goals, but were unwilling to question or alter their goals (single loop learning), whereas *Strategists* practiced "double-loop" learning in that they were willing to not only alter their behavior to fit achievement of their goals, but also willing, if evidence indicated, to change or adjust their goals as well (Argyris & Schon, 1974).

The scholarly literature on "fallback", which is retreating to an earlier stage of thinking and actions, is not well developed. For example, Torbert (2004) referred to "fallback" but identified it as a temporary state, but did not define the duration of the state as to whether that meant a short or prolonged period of retreating to an earlier stage. President Cooper acknowledged his tendency to "fallback" to a stance of trying to please people and to avoid conflict when he felt stressed, but it was unclear whether this was a

temporary or a habitual pattern in the particular context of the school. In the results

reported from interviews with faculty and staff, Cooper, for almost five years,

demonstrated a consistent pattern of delegating difficult, potentially conflict-laden school

issues to his vice president for academic affairs or to his Executive Team or simply

avoiding them through his absence from the school.

In one of the few studies to explore "fallback", McCallum (2008), in a study of

developmental behavior of 18 adults attending a group relations conference, found that

all reported experiences of "fallback", and described it in various terms from lacking a

genuine approach to a novel situation or temporarily forgetting their coping skills.

However, the more advanced the developmental stage, the sooner this "fallback" was

noticed and corrected. McCallum found that context and contingency–especially stress

and anxiety–could trigger the regression. My findings may reinforce McCallum's

conclusions about "fallback" and stress. If my second explanation is correct, then

Cooper's self-reports of high anxiety and reports by the faculty of Cooper's habitual

avoidance of risk and conflict may be useful data for future study.

Perhaps more importantly for the study of ego maturity in organizational

leadership, like McCallum, I came to the conclusion that stages of leadership

maturational development may be less fixed (more fluid) and longer lasting than

previously predicted (Torbert & Associates, 2004). Torbert (Torbert & Associates, 2004)

also made the distinction between unintended "fallback" and the purposeful selection of

earlier development behavioral levels (e.g., choosing to act as an expert or a diplomat

rather than feeling compelled to act that way). He contended that one might temporarily

"fallback" into earlier behavior when stressed (J. Amgwerd, personal communication,

February 26, 2012). However, I found, as did McCallum, that the boundaries between different stages are perhaps more fluid than previously suggested by other researchers (Cook-Greuter & Soulen, 2007; Kegan, 1982, 1994; Torbert & Associates, 2004). Perhaps stage boundary spanning is more frequent than has been previously thought.

Finally, in applying my findings to scholarly literature which examines the relationship of ego maturity to conflict engagement, I found two interesting lines of research. The first is by McGuigan and Popp (2007) and the second by Mitroff and Emshoff (1979). One contribution of my research is to provide a field study which extends the theoretical work of these authors. McGuigan and Popp (2007) hypothesized that a person's stage of ego maturity determines his or her conflict engagement approach. They built their explanation by interpolating data from more than 20 years of stage complexity theory interviews with adult subjects across multiple sectors. However, to date, there has been no field research to link these two together (McGuigan & Popp, 2007).

Mitroff and Emshoff's (1979) work on ill-structured problems hypothesized that ill-structured questions required a mature mindset (i.e., ego maturity) to engage in both definition and problem-solution explorations. Mitroff and Emshoff made the case that, since underlying assumptions must be uncovered and challenged in order to develop effective solutions, mature egos are essential to be able to withstand the interpersonal dynamics in which one's personal assumptions are challenged. They noted that personal ego investments in particular positions often prevent open dialogues and protect entrenched positions.

Applications

Leadership Practice in Community Colleges

My findings have several applications to leadership practices in community colleges. First, community college leaders would benefit from creating processes in their schools in which open dialogue is a regular and planned activity. The open dialogue process as practiced in the art of deliberation, for example, would enable faculty, staff, administrators, and students to gather together on a regular basis to discuss important issues aided by facilitators (Holman, Devane, & Cady, 2007; Schuman, 2006). However, unlike some facilitated discussions, deliberations are values-based discussions and not simply agenda-based. In addition, deliberative discussions focus on actionable steps rather than allowing the fruits of the conversation to languish. The benefit of such an approach is that the president would be out in front of conflict issues, not following them and operating in a crisis or semi-crisis management mode. Excel Community College, prior to Cooper's presidency, had a similar process through their All-College Forums, which were moderated, action step-focused, and provided both transparency and accountability.

Second, my research data speak to the need for open dialogue between the president and the faculty through the art of walking around and talking with faculty and staff. This requires a commitment on the part of the president to respectfully accept not only reaffirming feedback (supporting the president's decisions), but also searching out disconfirming feedback. The disconfirming feedback provides the critical data necessary to the president in order to evaluate decision making and to make course corrections as needed.

Walking around and talking informally with faculty and staff, as Birnbaum (1992)

noted, signifies to organizational members that the president is open to mutual

persuasion, that is, the faculty and staff feel like their voices are heard by the president.

When presidents walk around they are not only collecting valuable data to use in decision

making but also creating opportunities to make sense of information affecting the college

as well as to interpret events and actions to faculty and staff. This framing opportunity is

a continuous process, and meaning needs to be constantly renegotiated given that each

person in the organization brings his or her own interpretation and mindset to each event

and decision.

Although not the focus of this study, my work points to diversity in

developmental maturity among faculty, staff, students, trustees, etc. (Drago-Severson,

2004, 2008; Drago-Severson et al., 2001). Given that each person interprets events

through a different mindset—each with her own developmental framework—presidents of

community colleges would be wise to take this into account when strategizing about how

best to communicate to constituencies both inside and external to the college.

Educating Leaders for Community Colleges

The collected findings support the need to educate community college leaders on

how to engage in specific forms of communication and the creation of effective, mutual

relationships with faculty and other governance groups. To date, leadership programs for

community college presidents focus on how the president should deal with the Board of

Trustees and other external issues. The internal issues, especially the communication

function within a school between the president and her faculty, need more detailed

attention. In particular, more attention needs to be paid to the role of communications as

a reflection of the cognitive and emotional developmental outlook or mindset of the president.

One of the major challenges for leadership coaches and trainers is to prepare leaders for the stresses of the job. Drawing on my work, I would recommend that programs include testing for ego maturity (keeping the results confidential between the trainer and the participant will protect privacy), and creating developmental supports to help the participant grow into an increased awareness of self and others in stressful situations.

Role playing combined with reflection will enable community college leaders to experience learning in the moment and to develop self-awareness of habits such as withdrawing or disengaging for self-protection in embarrassing or stressful moments which block learning opportunities. Role plays are, in my estimation, one of the most valuable tools for leadership because, if designed correctly, the leadership student will experience stressful situations at a visceral level and so will be able to learn how to operate effectively by staying aware of the situation, especially when feeling emotionally overwhelmed when faced with personal vulnerability.

I recommend that leadership preparation and training programs such as those conducted by the American Association of Community Colleges and the Association of Community College Trustees integrate leadership ego maturational study and discussions into their curricula. For example, when leadership training programs focus on issues such as faculty collaborative relationships, governance, fundraising, strategic planning and the many functions and roles of a college president, these discussions could be framed within the context of how one's mindset influences the choices a president makes.

As Eddy (2003) pointed out, a president is continually making a set of choices of "one set of meaning(s) over another" (p. 453). Leadership educators could orchestrate group discussions in which each president might share their personal experiences of choices they made and explore the meanings they attributed to those choices. This one adjustment to the curricula—without any major overhaul to entire leadership education program—could create new opportunities for presidents to create a learning community among themselves in which they might share their concerns and challenges, as well as reflect on previous leadership failures within a supportive, non-judgmental environment.

Limitations and Future Research

Limitations

The chief limitation of my study is that it is based on a single case, focused on the study of one leader during a specific period of time. As such, my case may be atypical of presidential behaviors and experiences of conflict, especially among first-time presidents. President Cooper's experience and his conflict responses are closely tied to his previous academic managerial experiences; therefore, other first-time presidents with a different background may behave differently. This may be particularly relevant since Cooper represented a purposeful sample rather than randomly selected from among community college presidents nationally.

Another limitation is the methodology I selected, which was a modified grounded theory approach. I used methods drawn from phenomenological interviewing and ethnographic field work. As such, I entered into the research with some guiding concepts which would not have been the case in a traditional grounded theory method where the theories emerge from data without any prior guiding theories. The foci of my work

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included attention to contextual or relational leadership theory (leadership is best understood within the context that it takes place) and adult complexity theory based on the work of Torbert and Associates (2004) who contended that, as leaders develop ego maturity, they become more open to intrapersonal and interpersonal complexity and more tolerant of complex, ill-structured situations. Since I was guided by these conceptual principles, my research limits the scope of inquiry.

My research is also limited with regard to my findings on ego fluctuations (Finding #3), in that I did not specifically design my interview probes to include investigation of "fallback" phenomena as predicted by complexity stage scholars (Kegan, 1994; Torbert & Associates, 2004). The data which emerged on this subject were primarily derived from the discrepancy between Cooper's Leadership Development Profile (LDP) and interviews. While his LDP indicated that he used the mental model frame of an *Individualist*, his interviews and those from the faculty indicated behavior more in keeping with an *Achiever*. This finding is presented as a explanation and should be considered tentative. Other phenomena may have intervened to produce the appearance of fallback. For example, Cooper may have made the choice to behave at an earlier developmental level and simply chose not to disclose it to me.

My work may be limited in its probe of the cultural environment as a source of stress and a learning inhibitor for Cooper. My interviews with faculty and staff, observations of meetings, and review of documents helped me understand the organizational culture and environmental context in which the president operated and this informed by interpretations. However, my research provides a specific snapshot in a

specific time and place and therefore may be missing certain sources of cultural and contextual stress which influenced Cooper.

Future Research

The research raises three foci for future research, which might extend and deepen these findings. Each potential future agenda is discussed below.

Conflict and Shared Governance. This is an exciting time to be studying community college leadership and conflict. As we move into the 21st century, community college leadership is transitioning from a K-12 operational model to a higher education model exemplified by participatory decision making between administrators and faculty. With this transition toward greater collaboration comes the messiness, complexity, and ambiguity of governance issues. As Tierney (2008) and Birnbaum (2004) have suggested, shared governance is one of the most important issues in any academic institution and is one of the greatest challenges to community college presidents as there are few guides to help them. I recommend that future research further explore this issue by designing qualitative, quantitative and mixed methods studies which will (a) create a taxonomy of conflict issues in leadership and governance with the objective of identifying areas of frequent tensions for additional study; and (b) produce a database of case studies of presidential leaders who are or have grappled with shared governance in their colleges to learn more about how differences among presidential experience, context and conditions of leadership (including whether the community college is within a decentralized or centralized state system) and campus culture affect governance processes. This information will be especially valuable to the new generation

of presidents, as over 60% are expected to retire within the next five years (American

Association of Community Colleges, 2005)

Conflict and Ill-Structured Problems. My research results suggest that the nature

of the problems which community college presidents face will continue to be messy,

ambiguous, and complex because presidents are operating in environments which

increasingly produce problems for which there are many potential "right" answers but no

one certain right answer. Ill-structured questions require a different leadership process

than required for well-structured or well-defined questions (Mitroff & Emshoff, 1979).

To understand ill-structured questions, leaders need to be able to confidently draw upon

divergent, conflicting, and multiple viewpoints in order to uncover, challenge, and

understand underlying assumptions to the problems and to lead productive open

dialogues about potential solutions. This requires not only a tolerance for conflict but

also the ability to use conflict as a discussion tool. As Amey and Barnett (2006) have

argued, the new context of community college leadership requires a new emphasis on

recruiting and developing leaders who are socially and emotionally mature, rather than on

the traditional focus on managerial skill sets. Therefore, I recommend future research

which tests the results of my work by conducting replication studies focused on ego

maturity issues. I would recommend using the Leadership Development Profile as at

least one instrument in a study of ego maturity and to compare the results of the Profile,

as I did, with the president's experience of conflict and strategies for response to it. Of

particular interest will be to see if other presidents who are at the *Individualist* stage

approach ill-structured problems as isolated and unconnected to each other (as Cooper

did) or are able to reframe the problems into a larger construct in which these problems are seen as interconnected.

However, other instruments would also be valuable to employ either separately or in tandem with the LDP. The Subject-Object interview (SOI) (Lahey, Souvaine, Kegan, Goodman, & Felix, 1988), for example, uses a semi-structured interview process to probe for the construct (not content) of how a person makes sense of his or her experiences and problems. Kegan and Lahey (Kegan & Lahey, 2009) and Torbert (Torbert & Associates, 2004) suggested that both the LDP and the SOI are highly correlated. Others have suggested that these two instruments may produce slightly different outcomes (Popp, June 12, 2011, personal correspondence).

Another line of fruitful research moves away from the "whole person approach" (Kegan, 1982; Popp, 2001; Torbert & Associates, 2004) which contends that emotional and social maturity govern an individual's behavior regardless of the task or situation. Other theorists (Ross, 2008; Wolfsont, Ross, Miller, Lamport Commons, & Chernoff, 2008) have suggested that domain complexity theory is a more accurate measure of individual cognitive and social maturity. The theory posits that an individual has more evolved (or less evolved) skills in different domains. So, for example, if President Cooper had been assessed by this instrument in the domain of external relations and fund raising (which is the domain of his expertise), he might have reflected (hypothetically) a later stage of leadership complexity development.

Constructive developmental theory (theory of ego maturity) is but one lens through which to study conflict engagement. In order to understand the interplay between constructive developmental theory with other important factors such as

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personality, I recommend that instruments such as the Meyers-Briggs Type Indictor Test (Jung, Baynes, & Hull, 1991; Myers & Myers, 1980) and the Leadership Developmental Profile (LDP) (Torbert & Associates, 2004) be used to see if there are any correlations. Social intelligence may also be a factor in how a person might interpret and respond to conflict. Again, using an established social intelligence measurement instrument such as the Mayer-Salovey-Caruso Emotional Intelligence Test (Brackett & Mayer, 2003; Mayer, Salovey, Caruso, & Sitarenios, Sep, 2001) would also be useful in tandem with measuring ego maturity.

Conflict Leadership, Stress and Organizational Culture. A particularly useful line of research would be to study the relationship of organizational culture to leadership learning and conditions of stress. Stress has been suggested by several researchers (Kegan, 1994; Kegan & Lahey, 2009; Torbert & Associates, 2004) as being responsible for fallback behavior. This is particularly relevant given the increasing reluctance of senior administrators at community colleges to move into a presidential role due to stresses of the job (Wallin, 2010). Organizational culture has been linked to stress, and organizational culture may be best understood as a "holding environment" (Bolman & Gallos, 2011; Heifetz, 1994; Heifetz, et al., 2009; Kegan, 1994; Kegan & Lahey, 2009). Kegan and Lahey (2009) contended that the holding environment needs to combine both support and challenge, which they term "optimal conflicts" (p. 54). These optimal conflicts stimulate mental complexity (reasoning which brings together both thinking and feeling) and, as noted in Chapter 2, brings together three factors: the persistence of some life dilemma in an area of our life that we care about, feeling the limits of our current way of understanding it, and access to sufficient supports to neither be overcome by it or able

to escape or diffuse it (Kegan & Lahey, 2009). A particularly useful line of research would be to study how organizational environments influence the experiences of conflict tensions and stress. If Eigel and Kuhnert (2005) are correct, then presidents in an earlier stage of leadership maturation would be more susceptible to organizational environmental stresses than those at a later stage of leadership maturation.

Concluding Thoughts

My findings provide a cautionary tale for conflict engagement by highlighting three key findings. First, disengagement from potentially stressful conflict situations tends to exacerbate the conflicts, not mitigate them. Second, hunkering down, that is, to use a limited cognitive perspective in analyzing conflict tensions by using unilateral rather than multilateral perspectives creates a serious risk of circularity in thinking. If only one theory (one cognitive perspective) is used to analyze the data needed to solve a problem, often the data will appear to reinforce the theory used to uncover it in the first place. Third, ego maturity fluctuations may account for what may seem as erratic leadership decisions; however, it would be a mistake to assume that constructive developmental theory is able or should be used to explain leadership behavior. Constructive developmental theory is only one tool.

My three central messages drawn from this research are, first, that conflict engagement skills can best be understood as part of the organizational and environmental context and the developmental capacity (ego maturity) of the college president. Second, leadership through conflict can best be understood as an act of problem solving and problem solving as an act of collaborative learning. This requires leaders to be action learners (Torbert & Associates, 2004) and to able to learn on the job, in the moment

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(Mitroff & Emshoff, 1979). Third, ill-structured problems require a different set of problem-solving skills than is needed for well-structured problems. Well-structured problems with agreed-upon definitions and available solutions require expertise in the problem domain under consideration. By contrast, ill-structured problems require surfacing and challenging assumptions as central to solving ill-structured problems, and when assumptions are challenged, conflict often arises (Mitroff & Emshoff, 1979). Conflict is the catalyst for surfacing multiple perspectives, and multiple perspectives in turn challenge assumptions that might lead to ineffective solutions.

If leadership in community colleges is to pursue collaborative shared decision making, conflict situations must been viewed as an opportunity to learn and build strong relationships. Positive conflict engagement is a learning tool and as such it is critical within the academic profession to stop avoiding its existence (as if avoiding it will make it disappear) and to embrace it, and use it as a learning tool not only for academic leadership but also as a learning tool for the students we are in this profession to guide.

EPILOGUE

When I began this study I entered with the assumption that conflict could be managed. I had not, to be candid, accepted that conflict was a good thing or a positive occurrence because in my previous experiences conflict had been anxiety causing and not a source of learning. I was, like President Cooper, fine at "handling" conflict when I was not personally touched. But when I was personally involved, I found it very difficult to follow the prescribed steps in win-win negotiations. It is always easier on the side-lines than in the game, but many times not as satisfying.

I also entered this study without full understanding of the range of conflict as articulated by Pondy (1967), that conflict is always present at some stage or another. As creatures of organizations, we are constantly either creating or experiencing tensions or conflicts with others. As such, none of us is without some responsibility for the state of our organizations. I leave this study with a much greater awareness of my own vulnerabilities and hopefully more attuned or "mindful" (Langer, 1989) of how my actions affect others for better or worse. I also feel the sting of awareness about my ego maturity "developmental limitations," but also feel new hope and aspirations for applying what I learned to my relationships both professional and personal.

As we continue our rapid expansion into a globalized world, expectations for what it is to be a good leader need to change. Although advice books are replete with instructions on how to become a more collaborative and less hierarchical leader, the change on the ground comes about very slowly. The majority of organizations, including those in academia, still rely on leadership based on hierarchical power. But the obstacle it seems is not so much the leaders themselves than what we expect of them—we (those

who follow) continue to expect them to be smarter, stronger, more heroic than the rest of us, and to have the answers and solve the organization's problems. As Heifetz (1994) points out, before leaders can harness opportunity for change, we need to change our expectations. To realize that real leadership is not having–the plan, the vision or the answers–but rather leadership is finding the courage to dispel the myths and to teach others to take on responsibilities for their part. But as others take on their part, they will increasingly express their opinions–have different values and beliefs based on a variety of assumptions. Leadership in the post-heroic mode (Torbert, 2004; Joiner & Josephs, 2007) will be tougher than ever because deference may give way to defiance. Leaders will need to exercise skills of conflict engagement while maintaining respect for others and honesty in their role as teachers.

In changing our ideas of leadership we also need to change our ideas about conflict. Kegan (1994) argues that conflict has earned a bad reputation because we see conflict as a failure not an opportunity. We see it as evidence that somehow we didn't do our job by making ourselves clear, our positions known. But if we turn the tables and look at conflict, as Kegan (1994) suggests, as a wonderful example of interdependence and an equally wonderful opportunity to learn about others as well as ourselves, then conflict engagement may become the most essential leadership tool. We should welcome a continuous stream of small tensions or conflict, because without these tensions or petite conflicts we are unlikely to become aware of our blind spots–the limitations of our thinking, feeling and behavior –which need to be uncovered and explored in order to continue our journey of development and discovery,

If this study has contributed in some small way to a greater understanding of conflict as a leadership tool – in all its permutations – as not only part of life but a source of energy in life, then I will feel I did my job as a researcher of leadership.

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APPENDICES

APPENDIX A

Conflict Definitions: Representative Sample

Source	Definition	Key words
Coser 1956	Social conflict is a struggle between opponents over values and claims to scarce status, power and resources.	struggle, opposition, scarcity
Schelling 1960	Conflicts that are strategic are essentially bargaining situations in which the ability of one participant to gain his ends is dependent on the choices or decisions that the other participant will make.	strategy, bargaining, dependence
Deutsch 1973	Conflict exists whenever incompatible activities occur . . . one party is interfering, disrupting, obstructing, or in some other way making another party's actions less effective.	incompatibility, interference effectiveness
Wall 1985	Conflict is a process in which two or more parties attempt to frustrate the other's goal attainment . . . the factors underlying conflict are threefold: interdependence, differences in goals, and differences in perceptions	goals, interdependence perceptions
Pruitt and Rubin 1986	Conflict means perceived divergence of interest, or a belief that the parties' current aspirations cannot be achieved simultaneously.	interests, aspirations, beliefs
Conrad 1990	Conflicts are communicative interactions among people who are interdependent and who perceive that their interests are incompatible, inconsistent, or in tension.	communication, interdependence tension
Tjosvold and van de Vliert 1994	Conflict--incompatible activities-- occurs within cooperative as well as competitive contexts . . . conflict parties' can hold cooperative or competitive goals.	incompatibility, cooperation competition
Folger, Poole, and Stutman 1997	Conflict is the interaction of interdependent people who perceive incompatible goals and interference from each other in achieving those goals.	interaction, interdependence incompatibility
Pondy 1963	Conflict is a continuous cycle moving from latent to perceptual to emotional to overt to resolution to latent	Conflict as a continuous cycle
Hanson, 2003	Conflict arises where never perceived or real interests collide. It can be a result of a divergence in organizational goals, personal ambitions, group loyalties, departmental budget demands on scarce resources, ethnic expectations and demands, and so forth. Conflict therefore comes from a multitude of sources and is found at personal and organizational levels.	Interests, goals, ambitions, scarce resources
MARCH (1994)	*Primer on decision making.* Multiple actors "political"–not because it involves government or because it involves emotional outbursts – but because decision-makers sustain inconsistent preferences or identities. (62-63)	Conflict/ Identity/ preferences

Adapted from chart prepared for *COMM 440/540 - Theories of Conflict and Conflict Management*, Gregg Walker, Professor Speech, Oregon State University. Original downloaded from http://oregonstate.edu/instruct/comm440-540/triangle.htm 2.10.12

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APPENDIX B

Typology of Conflicts

Typology	Description
Veridical:	This is conflict perceived accurately as a "true" conflict, as when you and I both want to teach in the same classroom at the same time, and no others are available. Either you or I will have to change.
Contingent	This conflict can be solved by rearranging circumstances, but neither you nor I are aware of this. As for example, you and I need to teach at the same time, but we find out that one of us can move to another classroom in a different building. This requires some accommodation, but it is possible to resolve it.
Displaced	Conflict of this type involves disagreements over a surrogate issue because we are unable or unwilling to discuss the real issue. I pick an argument with you over taking the last notepad in our office, when in fact I am angry about you getting a larger office.
Misattributed	This is a disagreement between the wrong parties, usually over the wrong issue. For example, an unfilled faculty position is attributed to a lack of qualified candidates.
Latent:	This is when a conflict should be occurring but it is not. The conflict is not consciously recognized by the parties because it has been repressed, misattributed, or simply not yet part of one's psychological awareness system. For example, some women in the 1950s believed it was "natural" for men to have better paying jobs and legal rights.
False:	This is an occurrence of conflict for which there is no basis in fact, such as a misperception or misunderstanding. For example, I change the class schedule and you tell me that it is past the deadline. We call the appropriate person in change and she confirms that class schedules can still be changed.

Parker-Magagna, M. (2012) based on Deutsch (1973).

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APPENDIX C

Contemporary Leadership Theories

Contemporary Leadership Theories reviewed	Definition/Contribution to Theory
Trait	Individual traits associated with successful leaders that distinguish them from followers. Believe universal, objective traits of leaders exist. Leader-centric.
Behavioral	Behaviors of effective leaders –leader centric. Use a combination of task and relationship to guide interactions with subordinates. Leadership can be learned.
Power and Influence – transaction and Transformational	Social exchange process by acquisition and demonstration of power (transactional and transformational). Leaders use power to influence followers or reciprocal relationship between two. Transformational and Transactional considered as "bridging" theory to new form of leadership that is "non-centric."
Situational	Situational variables influence leadership behaviors (followers' attitudes and task aptitudes. Different leadership behaviors called for in different situations. Situations determine who is leader. Predictive models of leadership by match of style to situation. Expands to include context – not just leader-centric. Updated theories in last 15 years focus on socially constructed contexts and the dynamic notions of leadership – not static or fixed like before. Known as leader process theory.
Cognitive	Leadership and follower cognitive processes influence perceptions of leaders and effective leadership. Possibility of socially constructed leadership rather than objective phenomenon. Recognizes cognitive bias in how leadership is seen. Learning and mental models have been added in last 15 years, Bolman & Deal's 4 frames epitomize cognitive complexity and ambiguity model. Systems thinking rather than individual perspective.
Cultural/Symbolic	Functions of leadership seen as social construct that differs in cultural contexts. Individuals foster shared meanings and norms through interactions. Value and beliefs are important to understanding leadership.
Complexity/Chaos (linked to cognitive complexity theories)	Organizations seen as complex and chaotic, not neat, orderly like Newtonian universe. Recognizes influence of external environment to organization, speed of 21st decisions, globalization, and demands for equality that render old version of leader-centric power less useful. Focuses on cognitive complexity (multidimensional frames), flexibility, adaptability, and collaboration, decentralized and distributed leadership.

Contemporary Leadership Theories reviewed	Definition/Contribution to Theory
	Leadership as process – not person. Based on worldview social constructivism and post-modernism.* Systems thinking rather than individual perspective of leader.
Organizational Learning	Focuses on role of individual and organizational change through learning and development. Increase in cognitive and epistemological complexity, learning from mistakes, fostering collaboration. Leaders are constantly growing and changing, as are their followers/participants.
Team	Leadership is conceived as team-based, necessary in fast moving world of change. Also known as distributed leadership, pervasive leadership. World too complex and uncertain to depend on only one person to lead.

Parker-Magagna, M. (2012). Kezar & Contreras-McGavin (2006); Bolman & Deal (2003); Wheatley (1999), Burns (1978); Rost (1991), Fullan (1999).

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APPENDIX D

Leadership Definitions

Author	Definition of Leadership and Practices
Bergquist	Leaders should be a good fit with the organizational culture
Birnhaum	Leaders should fit with the culture
Burns (1988;2003)	Doing the right things vs. doing things right (leadership vs. management. The master discipline that illuminates the toughest problems of human needs and social change; sees it as an integration of both "traits" and "theories" Relationship of power based ". . . on the creative, dynamic interplay of wants and needs, motives, values and capacities of both would-be leaders and their potential followers." (p. 16?
Bolman & Deal (1991)	Architect, catalyst, advocate, prophet and poet (451). Key concepts: leadership is relationship and contextual. (421). Requires walking a tightrope between rigidity and spinelessness; in permanent "white water" (as quoted in Vaill, 1989 in Bolman & Deal (1991, p. 446). Tension to balance core values with elastic strategies (p. 447). Three core competencies: vision setting, creating standards for performance and focusing organizational effort. In addition, need ability to communicate visions, show commitment, passions, inspire trust and build relationships. (411-412)
Kegan (2006)	Key words: adaptive, helps group create shared knowledge; necessary for team building but not to create an army to carry out orders, but to "rebuild the plane while it is flying." Leader helps participants to uncover their hidden assumptions that prevent them from making necessary changes. Leadership is about change. (209-212)
Heifetz (2009)	Leadership with or without authority: Mobilizing people to address adaptive challenge from a position of authority – role brings resources and constraints. Without authority: taking action beyond the formal and informal expectations that define scope of power – lacking authority brings its own challenges.
Hemphel & Coons (cited in Yukl 1994)	The behavior of an individual when she/he is directing behavior toward a shared goal.
Hersey and Blanchard (1977)	Working with and through individuals and groups to accomplish organizational goals (power=leaders influence potential)
Katz and Kahn (1966) social psychology of organizations	Use of structure – (a) policy formation (b) interpolation of structure (c) use of structure to keep the organization in motion and effective operation
Kezar (2009)	A process, not an individual; culture and context dependent; collaborative and collective; mutual power and influence –change agent and participants; learning, empowerment and change environment. (p. 6)
Fullan (2007)	Setting direction for shared vision, goals, performance. Developing people while redesigning organizations (drawn from Marzano, Waters & McNulty (2005) as cited in Fullan p. 166). Also cites Leithwood et al (2004) for meta study which empirically supports these core leadership practices.

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Author	Definition of Leadership and Practices
	Also citing from Johnson (1996), Fullan lists three core responsibilities to be educational (learning and pedagogy); political (securing resources and building coalitions); and managerial (creating and using structures, for participation, support, supervision and planning) leaders. P. 420).
Kanter (1983)	People with power to mobilize others, to set constraints and make participation work. (p.249). Keep everyone's mind on the shared vision (and prevent "drift); but be explicit about what is NOT negotiable. Reward and give feedback. Hold tension between grassroots innovation and periodic strategic decisions by leaders; use plans as symbols of change, advertisements for supporters, games to test seriousness of people about their programs. (p, 275-76; 294)

Parker, Magagna, M. (2012).

APPENDIX E

List of Key Documents

Excel Community College Documents

1	Budget Committee Report 5.15.11
2	Strategic Plan 2008 -2011
3	State/Excel Leadership timeline
4	Mission Statement
5	Regional Accreditation Approval letter
6	Memo of Understanding: Trustees, Chancellor, Presidents
7	Standing Committee "teams" at RVCC: mission, purpose, accountabilities, composition, success indictors
8	Emails between Pres. Cooper and Parker-Magagna
9	Faculty Forum, Department Chairs: selected minutes 2000-2011
10	All-College Forum: selected minutes 2000 -2011
11	President's Council: selected minutes 1990 -2011
12	President's Executive Team: mission statement, selected minutes
13	Collective Bargaining Agreement Update: 11.22.11
14	Regional Accreditation Self-Study Report
15	Presidential interview pledge by Cooper to Excel College
16	Cooper presentation on AAUP principles to Excel College
17	Collective Bargaining Agreement for Faculty/Staff State union
18	College catalogs: 1989 - 2011
19	State legislation creating state community college system: July 2007
20	RVCC faculty handbook of policies and procedures
21	State system – community college faculty agreement regarding participation in college campus governance issues
22	Personnel list for Excel Community College
23	Early history of Excel Community College 1945 - 1977

APPENDIX F

FOR THE PRIMARY RESEARCH PARTCIPANT –THE PRESIDENT

The Seidman (2008) Protocol

Three part interviews:

The purpose of conducting three interviews with both the president and the key actors in this curriculum change is to establish a rapport and a history of their relationship to the phenomena (curriculum change and its conflict).

Seidman (2003) cautions that one interview with participants (rather than a series of three) risks getting only a small part of the participants' perspective and in most cases also risks failing to establish a trusted rapport with the researcher.

The president (my primary research participant) is aware that I am studying conflict within the context of institutional change, so I will use the term "conflict" in my interview.

The first interview: establishing life history which led to their work at the community college and probing for experiences of conflict. This may be helpful in understanding how pervious experiences with conflict on the job may be influencing their current attitudes.
Sample questions:
- Tell me your first recollections of experiencing conflict.
- How did you respond?
- What did the conflict experience mean to you?
- Tell me about some other experiences prior to this current role as president when you experienced conflict?
- In what ways did you feel that you influenced the conflict resolution for positive or negative results?
- Tell me about a time when you took a strong stand as a leader and why. How did it cause conflict? Or did it?

The second interview: This interview speaks to the "here and now" of the curriculum work at the community college. It avoids discussion of attitude and opinions about the work or their role, but rather seeks a factual account of "what the participant does."
- Tell me about your work as president. What is a typical day like? Or to put it another way, what do you do in the course of a week or month that provides an overview.
- Tell me about a time in your role as president that you experienced conflict as a leader.
- How do you approach conflict experienced in your job in general

Appendix F (continued)

The third interview: This interview asks participants to reflect back on the two pervious interviews, prompts may be provided, and to discuss what the experience of curriculum revision work at the community college means to them. But using the word "experience" I hope to elicit a broader range of meaning responses to include the experience of conflicts and how they are engaged.

- How do you think you approach conflict in general? What are the triggers that might influence how you approach conflict?
- How do you know when you have been successful in responding to conflict?
- In what way do you think you influenced the conflict you are describing to me now?
- How has conflict engagement over the years influenced you, if at all?

SUPPORT RESEARCH PARTICIPANTS (these participants will provide perspective on the president's response to conflict, the culture influencing how conflict is seen, and other factors or nuances that will help me understand conflict engagement). For these participants I am likely to use the words "challenging problem solving or decision making" or "problematic decision making." (My committee agrees that to use the word "conflict" with supporting research participants may take the interviews in direction not useful to my study. The participants should begin to discuss these issues of their own accord without hard probing. I plan to introduce the word "conflict" as a descriptor at the approach time. This process (and results) will be recorded in my field notes.
Some sample questions:

- Tell me about your experiences with this institutional change process as part of the president's advisory (cabinet) committee?
- What stands out as the most problematic issues you have faced?
- In general, how does your team (group) approach the problematic issues you have described?
- How has the team responded to these problematic issues?

(At this point I need to probe for the best way to get at those situations where discord or conflict was part of the process and to encourage them to describe it without too much opinion at this point).

APPENDIX G

LETTER TO RESEARCH PARTICIPANTS AND INFORMED CONSENT FORM

Dear Research Participant

I am conducting a research project to learn about how leadership in a community college responds to decision making and problem-solving challenges associated with major institutional change.

I am writing to invite you to participate in this project. I plan to work with you primarily, but I also plan to work with approximately five to seven additional participants in this study to understand more about this process and their perceptions of your role.

If you agree to participate in this study, you will be asked to commit to approximately 6-10 hours of interviews with me over the period six months, and an additional leadership development profile survey (which you and I have discussed). I plan to use audio recordings which will allow me to keep accurate notes on our conversations. These recordings will be coded for confidentiality before transcription. The electronic version of these transcriptions will remain in my possession and the original audio recordings will be destroyed unless you request to receive these recordings or ask that I keep them for later use by you, me or other researchers.

The data will be reported using pseudonyms. This will include not only all interviews but also the location and identity of your college. This data will be used for my dissertation in partial fulfillment of requirements for a Ph.D. degree in Educational Policy and Leadership, Department of Education, University of New Hampshire.

With this letter, I would also like to request your permission to use the information in academic publications and presentations, if appropriate opportunities should arise. I will contact you prior to pursuing any opportunities. Information from this study would be reported in publications and presentations using pseudonyms as noted in the paragraph above.

You will not receive any compensation to participate in this project.

The potential risks of participating in this study are anticipated to be minimal. Although you are not anticipated to receive any direct benefits from participating in this study, the benefits of the knowledge gained are expected to contribute to the empirical literature on community college institutional change processes, provide a greater understanding of the context of leadership in relationship to community college culture, and to provide insight into the intrapersonal and interpersonal challenges which a community college president faces when leading difficult problem solving and decision making processes.

Participation is strictly voluntary; refusal to participate will involve no prejudice, penalty, or loss of benefits to which you would otherwise be entitled. If you agree to participate and then change your mind, you may withdraw at any time during the study without penalty

I seek to maintain the confidentiality of all data and records associated with your participation in this research. You should understand, however, there are rare instances when I am required to share personally-identifiable information (e.g., according to policy, contract, and regulation). For example, in response to a complaint about my research, officials at the University of New Hampshire and my faculty dissertation advisor must have access to my research data.

Audio and electronic data will be stored in my home office for the duration of the study. Audio recordings, as noted above, will be destroyed unless you request it to be kept. I will keep electronic transcriptions, coded by pseudonym, in my home office. The identities represented by these codes will be kept in a separate secure location in my office and no one except my advisor and me will have access.

The work will be conducted by me alone.

If you have any questions about this research project or would like more information before, during, or after the study, you may contact: Professor Sharon (Nodie) Oja (my dissertation chair) or Professor Todd DeMitchell,(my faculty advisor and a dissertation committee member) at the following address: University of New Hampshire, Department of Education, 107 Morrill Hall, Durham, NH. 03824. Or at the following email addresses: nodie.oja@unh.edu or todd.demitchell@unh.edu

If you have questions about your rights as a research subject, you may contact Dr. Julie Simpson in UNH Research Integrity Services at 603-862-2003 or Julie.simpson@unh.edu to discuss them.

I have enclosed two copies of this letter. Please sign one indicating your choice and return in the enclosed envelope. The other copy is for your records. Thank you for your consideration.

Sincerely,

Martha Parker, PhD candidate, Department of Education, University of New Hampshire

Yes, I, _____ consent/agree to participate in this research project.

No, I, _____ do not consent/agree to participate in this research project.

_____   _____
Signature

APPENDIX H

University *of* New Hampshire

Research Integrity Services, Service Building
51 College Road, Durham, NH 03824-3585
Fax: 603-862-3564

09-Jun-2011

Parker, Martha
Education, Morrill Hall
POB 1400, 8 Ash Lane
Grantham, NH 03753

IRB #: 5191
Study: How a community college president responds to conflict in the context of institutional change
Approval Date: 02-Jun-2011

The Institutional Review Board for the Protection of Human Subjects in Research (IRB) has reviewed and approved the protocol for your study as Exempt as described in Title 45, Code of Federal Regulations (CFR), Part 46, Subsection 101(b). Approval is granted to conduct your study as described in your protocol.

Researchers who conduct studies involving human subjects have responsibilities as outlined in the attached document, *Responsibilities of Directors of Research Studies Involving Human Subjects.* (This document is also available at http://unh.edu/research/irb-application-resources.) Please read this document carefully before commencing your work involving human subjects.

Upon completion of your study, please complete the enclosed Exempt Study Final Report form and return it to this office along with a report of your findings.

If you have questions or concerns about your study or this approval, please feel free to contact me at 603-862-2003 or Julie.simpson@unh.edu. Please refer to the IRB # above in all correspondence related to this study. The IRB wishes you success with your research.

For the IRB,

Julie F. Simpson
Director

cc: File
    Oja, Sharon

UNIVERSITY of NEW HAMPSHIRE

INSTITUTIONAL REVIEW BOARD FOR THE PROTECTION OF HUMAN SUBJECTS IN RESEARCH

RESPONSIBILITIES OF DIRECTORS OF RESEARCH STUDIES INVOLVING HUMAN SUBJECTS

University of New Hampshire (UNH) tenure-track faculty, lecturers, senior lecturers, visiting faculty with rank, research faculty with rank, clinical faculty with rank, and permanent staff may serve as directors of research studies (researcher) involving human subjects. Adjunct faculty, courtesy faculty (affiliate, affiliate research, and affiliate clinical), and graduate and undergraduate students must be sponsored by an individual who qualifies to serve as a project director.

A. Researchers are responsible for complying with

I. UNH's Policy on the Use of Human Subjects in Research (http://unhcolom.unh.edu/UNHVII.Acad/E.htm),

II. UNH's Federalwide Assurance (FWA) (http://www.unh.edu/osr/compliance/support/ohrp.pdf), and

III. Title 45, Code of Federal Regulations, Part 46: Protection of Human Subjects (45 CFR 46) (http://www.hhs.gov/ohrp/humansubjects/guidance/45cfr46.htm).

B. Researchers are responsible for gaining familiarity with, and adhering to, the ethical principles stated in *The Belmont Report* (http://www.hhs.gov/ohrp/humansubjects/guidance/belmont.htm).

C. Researchers must submit all proposed research activities involving human subjects to the UNH Institutional Review Board (IRB) for review before commencing. Researchers must not involve human subjects in research activities until the researcher has received written, unconditional approval from the IRB for the study.

D. Researchers are responsible for protecting the rights and welfare of human subjects in their research studies.

E. Researchers are responsible for keeping co-researchers and all research staff informed about the nature and goals of the study, and the need to adhere to ethical and responsible practices.

F. Researchers are responsible for adhering to the IRB-approved protocol and consent process, including providing a copy of the IRB-approved and signed informed consent document to each subject at the time of consent, unless the IRB has specifically waived this requirement. The researcher must retain all signed consent documents for at least 3 years after the end of the study.

G. Researchers must request IRB approval for proposed changes in previously approved human subject research activities before initiating them, except where necessary to eliminate apparent immediate hazards to the subjects.

H. Researchers are responsible for reporting progress of approved research to the IRB as often as, and in the manner, prescribed by the approving IRB on the basis of risks to subjects. For studies approved at the Expedited and Full Board review levels, this must be no less than once a year (365 days) from the last review date.

I. Researchers must report to the IRB any injuries or unanticipated problems involving risks to subjects and others within one working day of occurrence.

J. Researchers will not seek to obtain research credit for, or use data from, patient interventions that constitute the provision of emergency medical care without prior IRB approval. A physician may provide emergency medical care to a patient without prior IRB review and approval, to the extent permitted by law. However, such activities will not be considered research nor may the data be used in support of research.

K. Researchers who collaborate with colleagues at other institutions/sites have additional responsibilities. Researchers will advise the IRB, the Office of Sponsored Research, and appropriate officials of other institutions of the intent to engage human subjects in research studies for which the UNH FWA or any related inter-institutional Amendment or Non-institutional Investigator Agreement applies. Institutions in the collaboration must possess an OHRP-approved Assurance prior to the involvement of human subjects in a research study.

Sentence Completion Test. This test is one of the most widely used and validity-tested instructions in psychometrics (Loevinger 1985; Loevinger and Wessler 1970 as cited in Rooke & Torbert, 2005).

The scoring manual contains virtually every possible action-logic response to each sentence stem. The test has a strong internal reliability because each single item is scored separately–not in sequence–to avoid a "halo effect" of early scores influencing later scores by the evaluating reader. The scores are eventually added together to create an overall statistical score and scores within a certain range are categorized as along a range showing the dominance of each stage. For example, a person scoring 20 answers at an Expert level overall may also exhibit other developmental levels, such as eight Diplomat responses, five Achiever, one Individualist, two Opportunist.

LDP as compared to the Kegan Subject-Object Interview

This type of reporting differs from the Kegan Subject-Object Interview reporting in that the SOI only reports overall score and not the appearance of other developmental levels that may be available in weaker versions.

Strengths and Empirical Support for LDP

The WUSCT has both high inter-rater reliability (Cox 1974; Hoppe 1972 as cited in Torbert, 2005) and internal consistency (Redmore and Waldman 1975 as cited in Torbert, 2005).

Criticisms

Executive Program Leadership for Change at Boston College, and founding member of the international society for Organizational Learning, co-founded by Prof. Peter Senge, MIT. He is the author of numerous books and peer reviewed articles including his seminal book *Action Inquiry* (Torbert & Associates, 2004).

He received a BA in political science and economics, and a PhD in administrative sciences from Yale University. He has taught at several universities including Harvard, Yale and Southern Methodist University.

Susanne Cook-Greuter. Cook-Greuter holds a doctorate from Harvard University in psychology and human development. The Leadership Development Profile is the result of a 20-year research into assessing worldwide views of adults and is an update to the original Jane Loevinger WUSCT. The LDP is designed to focus on adult thinking and actions as they pertain to the workplace and leadership skills, and is also designed to detect developmental stages at levels beyond the original WUSCT.