

CALIFORNIA STATE UNIVERSITY, NORTHRIDGE

EXPLORING THE CRITICAL LEARNING MOMENTS OF WOMEN COMMUNITY
COLLEGE EXECUTIVES: A PHENOMENOLOGICAL STUDY OF
TRANSFORMATIVE EDUCATIONAL LEADERSHIP PRACTICES

A Dissertation submitted in partial fulfillment of the requirements
For the Doctor of Education Degree in Educational Leadership

By

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Dedication

In remembrance of Dr. Ghaus Faiz.

I wish to dedicate this dissertation study to my beloved Baba-Jan, my Father.

Your devotion to your family, dedication to your practice,

Your genuine kindness, humility, and self-sacrifice

Will forever be my shining beacon.

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Abstract

EXPLORING THE CRITICAL LEARNING MOMENTS OF WOMEN COMMUNITY COLLEGE EXECUTIVES: A PHENOMENOLOGICAL STUDY OF TRANSFORMATIVE EDUCATIONAL LEADERSHIP PRACTICES

Hawa Ghaus-Kelley

Doctor of Education in Educational Leadership

The problem that this research study addressed was the need to explore the meaning of critical learning moments (CLM) phenomena in the transformative leadership practices of women executive leaders of 2-year public colleges in California. Therefore, the purpose of this study was to explore the *meaning* community college women executive leaders ascribe to CLM in their educational leadership practices in order to better understand how they are leading their colleges toward transformative, systemic reform. CLM are self-reflective opportunities of the significant occasions when overall lived histories of leadership experiences intersect with organizational knowledge and educational practice that lead to systemic reform for their campuses, with the potential to convey meaningful and insightful perspectives for women executive leaders. The study used a phenomenological multisite study design and a multi-theoretical lens by merging concepts of leadership theories and models related to adaptive and emergent female styles of transformative leadership with critical feminist theory to examine and document the leadership experiences and leadership practices of known change agents to better understand how systemic reform can best be implemented to benefit key stakeholders in our nation's largest public higher educational institutions. Purposeful, network, and criterion sampling strategies limited the participant sample size to women CEOs serving in four distinctive leadership levels whom successfully led their institutions to systemic reform. Three discreet categories of results developed: 4 Leadership Profiles, 3 Profile Themes, and 6 CLM Themes. Findings break new

ground in illuminating the previous gap in empirical knowledge surrounding CLM phenomena in the leadership experiences and leadership practices of women executive change agents in community colleges and districts in California. In informing educational policy and leadership practice, findings revealed the challenges women leaders face with economic, political, and budgetary issues in leading their colleges, internal organizational issues in advancing to CEO, social issues with regard to district and college CEO leaders' interactions, and gender issues with regard to sexism and bigotry experienced in the workplace during previous leadership roles or in seeking higher positions. Consequently, gender was individually & organizationally significant; participants experienced sexism, gender issues, and perceived divergent leadership styles and differing expectations than men in the same administrative positions. As a phenomenological critical study, it confirms previous feminist theorists' findings on organizational change being central to improving social, political and economically equitable reform for women. Findings contribute to building transformative change theory, providing a better understanding of how, why, and when women change-agent leaders use reform practices in leading systemic change, and new knowledge about female executive leaders in 2-year community colleges as adaptive, emergent reformers best suited for educational systemic reform in times of crisis, and ensuing periods of stability and growth. Furthermore, findings indicate that leadership training, mentor programs, and professional development activities at the district and college campus sites are crucial to developing future community college leaders, with a special regard to under-represented and marginalized groups, given the current state of CEO retirements and future vacancies. Implications for policy, practice and recommendations for further research are also offered.

Chapter 1: Statement of the Problem

Introduction

The California community college system is slowly recovering from one of the worst budget crises ever. There have been over \$800 million in budget cuts since 2008-09 coupled with the increased enrollment of close to 3 million students. This severe economic downturn or “the Great Recession” has not only contributed to the national attention, but for our nation’s two-year institutions serving the majority of underserved students of ethnic, socioeconomic, and gender diverse populations, it is a major issue given the recent trends in the state of California, which houses the largest of our nation’s two-year college systems (American Council on Education [ACE], 2012; American Association of Community Colleges [AACC], 2006, 2012; Boggs, 2011; Brown, 2013; CCCCO, 2013; Kirsch, Braun, Sum, & Yamamoto, 2007; Shults, 2001).

In addition, at least seven more forces have recently emerged to further complicate the matter: (a) leadership turnover at the top levels with the impending retirement of community college presidents and an executive leadership vacuum due to retiring college executives and presidents; (b) a dubious public opinion about the role of U.S. public higher education and its decline in global status, (c) changing ethnic and gender demographics of underrepresented groups in student populations, (d) an increased trend of more women in community college leadership positions, (e) changing community college in a shifting globalized world, (f) a collision of national and state pressures for institutional reform to increase student completion and graduation rates, and (g) the State of California undergoing and slowly recovering from one of the worst budget crises faced by higher education (AACC, 2012; ACE, 2012; Brown, 2013; CCCCO, 2012; Kirsch et al., 2007; Obama, 2009; Shults, 2001; Weisman & Vaughan, 2007).

These unprecedented and converging forces are putting enormous pressure on executive leaders to lead profound change and systemic reform by transformative leadership practices (AACC, 2012; ACE, 2012; Brown, 2013; CCCCCO, 2012; Kezar, 2001; Kirsch et al., 2007; Obama, 2009; U.S. Department of Education [USDE], 2013). AACC (2012) argued: “Reshaping the college of today to meet the needs of tomorrow means that community college leaders need to see change as their friend, embrace it, and, then, indeed, lead it” (p. 17). Embracing change and leading reform is a serious concern for all stakeholders in higher education, but for our nation’s two-year institutions serving the majority of underserved students of ethnic, socioeconomic and gender diverse populations, it is a major issue (CCCCO, 2013). As the largest sector in US higher education, public community colleges serve around 11 million students and 44% of the U.S. college population, but they are often are not equipped for the challenges lying ahead according to The Century Foundation’s Task Force on Preventing Community Colleges From Becoming Separate and Unequal (2013).

It is essential then to identify successful leadership practices and leaders who can generate and integrate transformative ideas into effective reform for their campuses given that the “leadership challenge becomes all the more critical in light” of recent trends, including the state of current leaders graying and retiring and the pool of potential new presidents shrinking (AACC, 2012, p. 17). Findings from recent studies support gender differences in leadership style and effectiveness, with females more likely to use transformational leadership behaviors and styles that are associated with contemporary notions of effective leadership toward reform (Eagly, 2005; Eagly & Carli, 2003, 2007; Eagly, Johannesen-Schmidt, & van Engen, 2005; Eddy, 2010; van Engen & Willemsen, 2004). Previous research on gender and leadership styles has found that women lead in a participative and democratic style (Bower & Wolverton, 2009;

Eagly et al., 2005; Eagly & Johnson, 1990; Krause, 2009; Milligan, 2010; Northouse, 2012; Tedrow & Rhodes, 1999). However, community college institutions are traditionally structured organizations that continue to be led by White males (Bower & Wolverton, 2009; Eagly & Karau, 2002; Eddy, 2008, 2010; Hopewell McNeely, Kuiler, & Hahm, 2009; Leatherwood & Williams, 2008; Milligan, 2010; Townsend & Twombly, 1988, 2006).

Further validating is the body of research studies on leadership styles at the executive level which have shown gender parity and commonplace assumptions that women are adequately or even overrepresented in the community colleges and that gender must not be significant and does not need to be explored with a critical eye. Yet, these assertions are questioned by research findings regarding community college patriarchal structures and processes in need of systemic, “multidimensional, multi-level, qualitative, discontinuous, radical organizational change (s) involving a paradigmatic shift” as fundamental to improving the condition of women in these organizations (Townsend & Twombly, 1988, p. 77).

Indeed, several researchers have found that “without change, women’s social, political, and economic conditions will continue to be unequal to men’s, and women will not have a significant voice in ‘breaking out of the mold of patriarchal thinking’ ” (Levy & Merry, as cited in Townsend & Twombly, 1988, p. 77). Since the late 80s, even though women have gained a significant presence up to certain levels of leadership positions in community colleges, they have not yet achieved parity in executive leadership positions (ACE, 2009; ACE, 2012; Bower & Wolverton, 2009; Bright, 2010; Chin, 2004; Cook, 2012; Eagly, 2005; Eagly & Karau, 2002; Hopewell et al., 2009; Krause, 2009; Leatherwood & Williams, 2008; Milligan, 2010; Townsend, & Twombly, 2007; Weisman & Vaughan, as cited in Eddy, 2010; NCES, 2007; 2012; van Engen & Willemsen, 2004; USDE, 2012).

Research Problem

The problem that this study addresses is the need to explore the meaning of critical learning moments (CLM) in transformative leadership practices of female executive leaders of two-year public colleges in California. CLM are self-reflective opportunities where overall lived histories of leadership experiences intersect with organizational knowledge and educational practice that lead to systemic reform for their campuses with the potential to convey meaningful and insightful perspectives for women executive leaders. Community colleges can serve as change agents if their leaders desire (Cohen & Brawer, 2008; Eddy, 2010; Kezar, 2001; Townsend & Twombly, 2006). Yet, within the theoretical framework and the vast body of empirical literature on organizational change and educational leadership reform, scholars fall short in fully explaining why, how, and in what ways women executive leaders in the community colleges are more likely to use transformational leadership practices, and emergent and adaptive styles of leadership behaviors. It is important to note, however, that immediate changes within an organization are not prescriptive nor need follow the self-reflection of critical learning moment phenomena by female executives. Multiple factors, such as institutional culture, leadership styles, organizational processes, continual demands of budgetary resources, and the relationship among CLM and how reforms in a college follows them—sometime slowly and as an evolution—will need to be taken into account.

Previous research has shown the prejudice women experience in leadership positions (Eagly & Karau, 2002; Hopewell McNeely, Kuiler, & Hahm, 2009) and that there are fewer women leaders in higher education, and that women lead differently than men. For instance, women utilize a more collaborative leadership style than men (Eddy, 2008; Eddy & Cox, 2008; Eagly, 2005; Ginsberg & Wlodkowski, 2009; Lattuca & Stark, 2009; Milligan, 2010; van Engen

& Willemsen, 2004). Other studies have found that women's use of democratic styles are adaptive in that they use styles that produce the most favorable evaluations and outcomes; Northouse, 2012; Townsend & Twombly, 1998;).

Other research studies have found gender differences in leadership style and effectiveness, with females more likely to use transformational leadership methods to include participative and democratic techniques which are associated with contemporary notions of effective leadership toward reform (Burns, 2005; Ginsberg & Wlodkowski, 2009; Eddy, 2008; Eddy & Cox, 2008; Eagly, 2005; Kezar, 2001, Lattuca & Stark, 2009; Malm, 2008; Milligan, 2010; Northouse, 2012; Senge, 1990; Townsend & Twombly, 1998; van Engen & Willemsen, 2004; Wheatley, 2006). Given the problem that this study addresses—the lack of empirical and conceptual literature on what is essential for women executives to lead organizational change and systemic reform in California community colleges, there is a need to explore the meaning of critical learning moments (CLM) in transformative leadership practices of female executive leaders of two-year public colleges and districts in California.

Furthermore, national, state, and regional conversations must involve women in the forefront of the dialogue for successful reform initiatives (Bright, 2010; Chin, 2004; Eagly et al. 2005; Eddy, 2010; Milligan, 2010; Townsend & Twombly, as cited in Eddy, 2010; Townsend & Twombly, 2007). While research has previously focused on leadership at four-year and two-year institutions, little investigation has been offered regarding the CLM of female change agents. What are critical moments in educational practices for women executive leaders in leading their campuses toward systemic reform? In spite of the gravity of national, state, and regional pressures and recommendations for reform, there is a lack of empirical literature on how women

executive leaders utilize transformative practices for systemic organizational change and how they apply their leadership styles and tools toward promoting and managing institutional reform.

Indeed, the latest report by the American Association of Community Colleges (2012) asserted that, despite the fact that there are various advocates and rationales for organizational change in order to make community colleges more efficient and effective organizations, “regretfully from the feminist perspective, this same literature offers few analyses of how women are affected by change” (Townsend & Twombly, 1998, p. 84). Eddy (2010) further confirmed in her most recent research that “despite the fact that women have a significant presence at community colleges, the leaders of these colleges are still mostly White men” (p. 120). Thus, the literature exposes little attention to feminist processes for systemic change in community college institutions (Costello, 2012; Eagly, 2005, 2007; Eagly & Carli, 2003; Eagly, Johannesen-Schmidt, & van Engen, 2005; Nolen-Hoeksema, 2010; Pflanz, 2011; van Engen & Willemsen, 2004). In addition, because traditional community college institutions serve as gateways in preparing the majority of underserved populations, and are traditionally structured institutions, still led, primarily, by White men, I argue it is imperative to examine organizational change through the lens of female change agents and their leadership approaches, determine the extent of their perspectives, and address the need for reform in largest sector of American higher education such that they can be an agent of change for all constituents involved in the community college’s shared mission.

Research Purpose and Significance

The purpose of this study was to explore the meaning of experiences for female executive leaders in California community colleges to better understand the essence of critical learning moments in their leadership practice. From firsthand accounts through reflective dialogue, the

findings from this study will fill a gap in knowledge and practice by developing a better understanding of the complexities of contemporary female executive leaders' experiences during reform. Given the current state of the conceptual and empirical literature related to transformational organizational change, female leadership style, and women in higher education, *critical learning moments* (CLM) is a term I have generated to refer to the *ah-ha* instances – the significant moments of women CEO change agents' leadership practice. In exploring what *meaning* community college women executive leaders ascribe to their own critical learning moments, I hope to understand how transformative institutional change can best be implemented and whereby best practices in the field of higher education leadership practice can benefit key stakeholders and contribute to the overall policy and academic body of knowledge.

Through the critical lens of women executive leaders, the findings from this study will attempt to shed light on leadership as practiced by women change agent executives at diverse two-year colleges. By advancing the knowledge of female leadership and organizational change in the field of higher education, this study will create a profile of contemporary female executive leaders in community college institutions so that practitioners in education and public policy can better understand the critical learning moments in effective leadership practices of women executives as applied toward systemic organizational reform. To that end it is crucial to explore what meaning these female executives are making of critical learning moments for transforming their community colleges into more inclusive, effective, and democratic agents for change.

Research Questions

This study will focus on questions directly related to gaps described in the literature review. The research questions are: (1) What is essential for women executive leaders at California community colleges to describe critical learning moments as meaningful in their

leadership practice? and, (2) What transformative leadership practices have women leaders utilized to lead their campuses to systemic?

Theoretical Framework

I used a multitheoretical lens for this study's interpretive framework. By merging concepts of transformative leadership theory from organizational change literature models and relating them to adaptive and emergent styles of female leadership through the critical feminist lens, I interpreted and explained the results of this study to better explicate the essence of critical learning moments in the leadership practices of women executive leaders. Through a narrative form in a multicase phenomenological case study approach, I explored what meaning community college female executive leaders ascribe to critical learning moments to better understand how women executives are leading organizational change.

Overview of Methodology

Within the research tradition of phenomenology, this study focused on female executive leaders' lived experiences and, upon reflective dialogue of these experiences, how they articulated and made meaning related to critical learning moments (Creswell, 2012; Rossman & Rallis, 2003; Sokolowski, 2000). Firsthand accounts through two iterative, sequenced, and semi structured interviews with each woman executive leader assisted in providing a better understanding of meaning and fundamental nature of critical learning moments in each participant's leadership practice. Evidence from phenomenological research is derived from first-person reports of life experiences (Moustakas, 1994). In accordance with phenomenological principles, "Scientific investigation is valid when the knowledge sought is arrived at through descriptions that make possible an understanding of the meaning and essences of experience" (p. 84).

In this study, a multisite case study approach will inform the examination of contemporary leadership experiences and practices of women executive leaders by capturing firsthand accounts of their lived experiences during organizational change processes at two-year colleges in California. This study utilized a scaled, multicase study approach within the phenomenological research tradition. This framework lends itself well to exploring a central phenomenon—to better understand the essence of women leaders’ experiences and the essential structure of these experiences (Bloomberg & Volpe, 2012; Creswell, 2012; Miles, & Huberman, 1994; Rossman & Rallis, 2003). Since this study’s research purpose drove decisions for research sites and participant selection, data collection for location and member selection were based on how the researcher could best learn from women executives at these sites. In using a case study design within the phenomenological research tradition to examine the meaning of experiences of women executive leaders, their perceptions of critical learning moments are the phenomena of interest in this study. Furthermore, their lived experiences related to transformative events, processes, and experiences in their leadership practice were examined. Shaped by conceptual questions to explore female leaders’ lived experiences, the researcher created a reflective dialogue about the meaning of the women leaders’ experiences and significant learnable moments, in light of their histories, during the current context of environmental challenges and transformative leadership reform efforts within their respective institutions (Seidman, 1998).

Limitations

According to Bloomberg and Volpe (2012), limitations of a research study expose the conditions that may confine and provide boundaries for the study; moreover, these authors argue that “regardless of how carefully you plan a study, there are always some limitations, and you need to explicitly acknowledge these” (p. 114). By controlling, anticipating, and stating any

restrictions of a study within a specific context, “the reader can make decisions about its usefulness for other settings” (Bloomberg & Volpe, 2012, p. 114). One limitation of this study is the limited number of institutions with several women in upper-level posts, with the majority electing to not have children; consequently, the study may not reflect every women CEOs experiences, especially those with children toward advancing. The transferability of this study’s findings is also limited. First, it is restricted to one state, California. Second, data may not reflect the experiences of all community college women in senior-level positions.

Despite these limitations, a bounded and scaled phenomenological case study is still the ideal method to meet this study’s overall purpose. Specifically, I will gain insight from fewer participants by using multiple, iterative interviews to examine CLM phenomena of women change agents in two-year community colleges and districts bounded by the current time and place: California during and in the aftermath of “the Great Recession”. Lastly, an alternative of design in qualitative research is “useful to other potential researchers who may choose to conduct a similar or replication study” (Creswell, 2012, p. 199). Since the findings of this study may apply and be useful to other community college institutions, an alternative possibility for future researchers in replicating this study would be to add additional states, include a third interview with participants, or a larger participant and site sample size wherein women hold executive leadership positions in community colleges (Bloomberg & Volpe, 2012).

Delimitations

As a complement to limitations, the delimitations of research are intended to clarify the boundaries of a study. Delimitations, according to Bloomberg and Volpe (2012), serve as indications of how the researcher narrows the scope of his or her study. In this study, the delimitations that I will control for are the location and sample size. The location and sample size

parameters are delimited to California community colleges and districts. Other delimitating parameters of this study include gender, age, and years of leadership experience. Four participants in executive leadership positions—college and district chancellors, superintendents, presidents, and vice presidents—composed the main data sources of this study. I used purposeful, chain sampling techniques through personal network of contacts including academics and professors in educational leadership program, those who work within the community college sector, and pilot study participants' (former and current presidents of community colleges). I selecting sites with female executives identified by those who have worked with or know these women as change agents, in bringing intuitional reform to their colleges. I also used criterion sampling to yield a sample with the following characteristics as criterion: individuals must be female with 10 or more years of experience in high leadership positions in public higher education; over the age of 40, and with a graduate academic degree, who currently lead a public, two-year community college in southern California. Finally, this research is delimited further since this is a study of critical learning moments in the leadership practices of women executives toward systemic campus reform, not necessarily a study of leadership style per se or a comparative study of gender-based practices.

Organization of the Dissertation

Subsequent to this first chapter, which made a case for the significance of the problem, contextualized the study, and provided an introduction to the study's basic components, this study will proceed to chapter two, a review of literature. This chapter will frame the study in the context of previous research and present a critical synthesis of empirical literature according to relevant themes discovered. The chapter will also justify how the study addresses gaps in the literature and outline how transformative leadership theory relates to women executives' styles

of leadership in practice. Next, chapter three will situate the study in a particular methodological tradition; provide a rationale for that approach; describe the research design, research tradition, setting, and research sample; it will describe data sources, collection, and data analysis methods. Chapter four will organize and report this study's main results and findings, including the presentation of relevant qualitative data (narrative data from in-depth interviewing) and provide comprehensive thematic data analysis, and end with a summary. In chapter five, I will evaluate the research questions and interpret the results through my conceptual lens. I will present recommendations for future policy and practice, such as action planning for educational improvement. I will conclude by identifying topics that may need closer examination for the reader and future researcher.

Chapter 2: Review of the Literature

Introduction

Unprecedented forces, such as severe economic downturn - “the Great Recession”, over \$800 million in budget cuts since 2008-09, coupled with the increased enrollment of close to 3 million students have put enormous pressure on executive leaders to lead profound transformation through innovative reform efforts in California community colleges (AACC, 2012; Brown, 2013; CCCCO, 2012). However, despite state and regional recommendations for reform, there is a lack of empirical literature on (a) how change agents, women executive leaders utilize transformative practices for institutional change and reform in public community colleges today, (b) what is essential for women executive leaders to lead systemic organizational reform in the midst of external pressures, and (c) what *meaning* community college women executive leaders ascribe to their own critical learning moments in their leadership practice.

This chapter frames the study in the context of previous research, presents a critical synthesis of empirical literature, and justifies how the study addresses gaps in the literature. This study delimits the literature review to analysis of three major themes related to female leadership and community colleges reform. First, I will review literature on community college reform initiatives at the national, state, and regional levels. Second, I will examine gender, education, and leadership themes. Third, I will identify the problem that this study addresses: the lack of empirical and conceptual literature on the critical learning moments of executive leaders - on what is essential for women executives to lead organizational change and systemic reform in the California Community Colleges. It is necessary to bridge the gap of knowledge between empirical studies, theoretical approaches, and the practical approaches in the field in order to better understand what is essential for women executives to describe critical learning moments as

meaningful in their leadership practice. Next, for this study's theoretical framework, I will use a multitheoretical lens and merge concepts of transformative leadership theory from organizational change literature models and relate them to adaptive and emergent styles of female transformative leadership through the critical feminist lens. Finally, I will end with a concluding summary, detailing implications and providing a discussion for future research recommendations.

Community Colleges and the Call for Reform: National and State Mandates

Community college leaders are caught in the eye of a perfect storm which has been emerging since 2007 (AACC, 2007, 2012; ACE, 2012; Kirsch et al., 2007). Various federal and state initiatives, national and state policy makers, and advocacy organizations have pressed for systemic reform in the U.S. higher education system, especially within the community college system, urging executive leaders to spearhead efforts locally at the institutional level (AACC, 2012; ACE 2012; Brown, 2013; Obama, 2009). The AACC, the primary advocacy organization for the nation's community colleges, asserted in its 2012 report *Reclaiming the American Dream: A Report From the 21st-Century Commission on the Future of Community Colleges*, that institutional change needs to be led by leaders of community colleges who are committed to systemic reform. The main findings of the report regarding leadership reform pertain to my study's purposes and research questions as I will examine critical learning moments and transformative leadership practices women leaders of California community colleges utilize to lead their campuses to systemic reform.

President Obama (2009) outlined a blueprint for a national mandate to increase student success and graduate more college students in his American Graduate Initiative. He stated,

Now is the time to build a firmer, stronger foundation for growth that will not only withstand future economic storms, but one that helps us thrive and compete in a global economy. It's time to reform our community colleges so that they provide Americans of all ages a chance to learn the skills and knowledge necessary to compete for the jobs of the future. (p. 1)

The current federal administration expects 5 million (or 63%) of new degrees to come from the community college sector, according to the Century Foundation (2013); although “community colleges are expected to shoulder the bulk of the challenge . . . [they] are often not equipped for the challenge” (p. 3). This mandate, the American Graduate Initiative challenges state, regional, and institution leaders to develop and implement practical leadership applications to increase student success and completion by innovative practices, thereby increasing pressure for accountability, transparency, and institutional efficacy. Furthermore, challenges for the new century have given rise to the need for community colleges leaders to “completely rethink what are appropriate financing, and educational products, for the institutions they lead”, and to be effective long-term, “community college presidents will have to not just understand, but actually possess the traits associated with entrepreneurialism” (Frost, Raspiller & Sygielski, as cited in Sutin, Derrico, Raby, & Valeau, 2011, p. 57) as an inherent part of their transformational leadership.

For the State of California, adding to the leadership challenge is the chaotic environment created by the \$800 million in budget cuts over the last five years coupled with the increased community college enrollment of close to 3 million students. During the most recent budget crisis, California public community college institutions have lost their lead in the areas of innovation, quality, affordability, completion, transfer, and overall success rates (Brown, 2013).

Indeed, “less than 30% of degree seeking students at community colleges complete a degree, earn a certificate, or transfer within six years” (Brown, 2013, pp. 35-36). Furthermore, the recent passage of Propositions 30 and 98, plus Governor Brown’s 2013-2014 budget proposal leading California taxpayers to provide approximately \$13 billion of annual general fund support, created pressure for better accountability and more innovative program development, including the use of technology to increase dismal student success and graduation rates in two-year colleges across the state (AACCC, 2012; AERA, 2012; Brown, 2013; CCCCCO, 2013; Kirsch et al., 2007). The call for improvement is as urgent today as ever. “When students are turned away from courses,” it becomes crucial that community colleges “move aggressively to implement reforms to provide high-quality instruction at lower cost, decrease the time it takes to earn a degree, and increase graduation rates, by deploying their teaching resources more efficiently” (Brown, 2013, pp. 35-36).

Moreover, with mandates to serve disadvantaged groups, such as minority students, community college executive leaders are in a position to promote equitable reform and systemic change in their campuses to better serve and prepare the majority of students who attend higher education in the United States and, in particular, in the State of California for the increasing globalized workforce (Frost, et al., 2011). In their report on Preventing Community Colleges from Becoming Separate and Unequal, Century Foundation (2013) maintained that “a central problem is that two-year colleges are asked to educate those students with the greatest needs, using the least funds, and in increasingly separate and unequal institutions . . . we need *radical innovations* that redesign institutions and provide necessary funding tied to performance” (p. 4).

In addition to the collision of national and state pressures for institutional reform to increase student completion and graduation rates, and the State of California undergoing and

slowly recovering from one of the worst budget crises faced by higher education, other forces have recently emerged to further complicate the matter including: (a) leadership turnover at the top levels with the impending retirement of community college presidents and an executive leadership vacuum due to retiring college executives and presidents; (b) a dubious public opinion about the role of U.S. public higher education and its decline in global status, (c) changing ethnic and gender demographics of underrepresented groups in student populations, (d) an increased trend of more women in community college leadership positions, (e) changing community college in a shifting globalized world (AACC, 2012; ACE, 2012; Brown, 2013; CCCCCO, 2012; Kirsch et al., 2007; Obama, 2009; Shults, 2001; Strike, Haller, & Soltis, 2005; Weisman & Vaughan, 2007). These trends, including massive retirements of executives and incumbents inheriting problems from previous administrations are monumental problems in community colleges, which continue to experience internal institutional challenges, such as limited course access, layoffs, furloughs, statute audits, and fiscal and enrollment management problems (AACC, 2012; Kirsch et al., 2007).

Moreover, community college executive leaders are expected to lead transformative reform initiatives in their colleges' performance and completion rates and are under a great deal of pressure from district and legislative policies at the national and state levels. In addition to external pressures, other unique leadership challenges for community college leaders include dealing with new, internal, institutional challenges while leading a culture of change on their campuses during the "Great Recession", the economic crisis, and managing reform in its aftermath (Ginsberg, & Wlodkowski, 2009; Kezar, 2001; Lattuca & Stark, 2009; Lennick, & Kiel, 2005). As a result, today's community college leaders require not only entrepreneurial, authentic leadership skills and techniques to manage their multifaceted institutions, but "a skilled

transformational leader will certainly possess the necessary traits and attributes . . . to help guide their institutions” (Frost et al., 2011, p. 56) to increase student success and institutional effectiveness by instituting innovative reform initiatives, change processes in their colleges, and accountability measures. Yet, this is far from easy, given that today’s community colleges operate in a “globalized resource development context” (Frost et al., 2011, p. 58). Thus, it becomes imperative to better understand how executive leaders and known change agents who have successfully transformed their colleges can better inform current policy and practice.

Gender, Education, and Leadership: Women in Leadership Positions in Community Colleges

Women in educational settings: Trends

Even though there is an increase of women in leadership positions in community colleges, recent trends still show that there are fewer women leaders than men (AACC, 2007; ACE, 2012; Bower & Wolverton, 2009; Bright, 2010; Eddy, 2010; USDE, 2012). Although women earn the majority of postsecondary degrees in undergraduate and graduate schools, with 61% of community college students enrolled being female nationally, and 56% in California - they are still underrepresented in the field of leadership and executive positions. Indeed, women occupy just 26% of all college presidency positions according to recent data from AACC (2012) and ACE (2012).

ACE’s most recent, 2012 report provided a sobering look at the continuing challenge of diversifying the ranks of the college presidency. While women have increased their representation as college presidents to 26% in 2011, up from 23% in 2006, the proportion of college presidents who are racial and ethnic minorities declined slightly, from 14% in 2006 to 13% in 2011(ACE 2012). However, when minority-serving institutions are excluded, only 9% of

college presidents in 2011 belonged to racial and ethnic minority groups, unchanged from 2006. “Leadership that is not only effective but reflective of the world around it will be key to managing the challenges of today and the unknown challenges of tomorrow,” said ACE President Molly Corbett Broad (ACE, 2012, p.7). “As students, faculty and staff become more diverse, we are reminded yet again about the importance of developing a more diverse pool of senior leaders—a task which remains one of ACE’s top strategic priorities” (ACE, 2012, p.7).

According to AACC’s (2012) statistics, 28% of current CEO leaders of community colleges are women. Thus, despite demographic trends of a leadership vacuum with 84% of current presidents expecting to retire by 2016, the increased routes to executive leadership positions and women’s significant presence at community colleges, the leaders of these institutions are still mostly “White men . . . the pathway to the corner office is more promising for women” (Eddy, 2010, p. 120). Yet, according to Weisman and Vaughan (2007) study, nearly 60% of presidents are 61 or older, up significantly from 2006. If the percentage of women among new hires continues to rise . . . nearly a third of all new hires, compared to just over a fourth overall—the aging presidency should mean retirements that will create increasing opportunities for women.

The need to create a diverse pool of leaders to meet the needs of a diverse pool of students for a globally skilled workforce is imperative and tied to the mission of community colleges (Baker, 1994; Eddy 2010; Frost et al., 2011; McGee Banks, 2007). Similar to trends of the American workforce in the general population, the profile of women and minorities is dramatically changing in education for these groups and, especially, in community colleges institutions (ACE, 2012). In 1986, only 8% of community college presidents were female; by 1998, 22% were female. For minorities, the percentage of presidents hired increased between the

years 1995 and 1998; 34% of presidents hired were female and 16% were minority (Shultz, 2001). Then, the American College President (Corrigan, 2002) reported that in 2001 women represented only 21% of presidents and minorities represented only 13%. A later report by the American College President (King & Gomez, 2008), revealed a slight increase in women and minority representation of presidents to 23% and 13.6%, respectively.

Not only are women and minorities still underrepresented as presidents, but also, according to the report by *The American College President* (ACE, 2007), the rate at which these two groups are rising to the presidency is beginning to slow. Women hold 26% of all college presidencies, according to recent data from American Association of Community Colleges (2012) and American Council on Education (2012). While women have increased their representation (26% in 2011, up from 23% in 2006), the proportion of presidents who are racial and ethnic minorities declined slightly, from 14% in 2006 to 13% in 2011. ACE's (2012) survey of American college presidents found an increase in the presence of women based on survey data collected in 2011:

“Women rose from 23.0% of presidents in 2006 to 26.4% in 2011, increasing their representation by nearly 15%. The figure has risen steadily since ACE began its survey, with the biggest increase in the 1990s. Only 9.5% of presidents in 1986, women more than doubled in representation to 19.3% in 1998. If that rate of increase had persisted, women would now be approaching half of all college presidents instead of barely over a quarter. At the other extreme we find associate colleges, a third of which are now led by women. Women did better generally at public than private institutions, but their share of presidencies at public four-year schools fell significantly in the last five years, from 34% to 28%. Overall trends in presidential selection have gender implications. For

example, nearly one-fifth of the presidents moved into their current position from another presidency and over a third from provost or chief academic officer (CAO). Both figures are higher than in 2006... While it may appear that women in senior and faculty positions are slowly closing the gender gap, the potential pool from which many women presidents emerge still indicates that more leadership development, mentoring, and networking are needed to increase the representation of women presidents, especially for women of color” (ACE 2012, as cited in Cook, 2012, pp.2-3).

These numbers mask big differences by type of school, with women presidents in community colleges leading at the highest percentage in comparison to other school types or degree-awarding institutions, increasing from 28.8% in 2006 to 33% in 2011, yet, deliberate effort can change that equation. According to ACE (2012, as cited in Cook, 2012) “If the proportion of women who serve as senior administrators and full-time faculty provide a standard for equity, then women, as presidents, remain underrepresented. Women make up 57% of faculty and senior administrative staff, but less than half that percentage of presidents” (p.3).

Similar to U.S. higher education institutional demographics indicating a marked increase in the female students, since 2008 current global trends also illustrate an increase in female enrollment in colleges around the world as well. In fact, over half the college students in the world are female (UN, 2012). Currently, in the United States, there are more females attending college than males (Claudia, Katz, & Kuziemko, 2006). According to the American Association of Community College’s (2012) webpage, 57% of community college students are female and this number is on the rise. In California, the CCCDO (2012) reported that 53% of students attending two-year public colleges are female. In community colleges, females are now

surpassing males in enrolling, attending, and graduating, adding to the need to prepare future leaders to meet the needs of a diversified student population (AACC, 2012).

Community colleges, as democracy colleges and consensus-building institutions within the community, are known for their open-door mission and have provided many women students with access to higher education (Cohen & Brawer, 2008; Eddy 2010). Community colleges have been noted to be good places for women to work (Townsend & Twombly, 2006). Eddy's (2010) study confirmed that more community college presidencies may be awarded to women in the future, especially if they are "mentored and supported as they move along their career pathway" (p. 120). Moreover, with a mission to serve all underrepresented groups, community colleges and their executive leaders are in a position to promote, through their leadership practices, ethnic, racial, and gender equity at their institutions.

Yet, despite being inclusive and supportive of women, stereotypes and mobility challenges exist that may impede the success of female leaders and the advancement of women to upper leadership positions (Eagly & Karau, 2002; Hopewell McNeely, Kuiler, & Hahm, 2009). Other researchers agree that there are stereotypes and mobility challenges, such as Leatherwood and Williams (2008) who asserted that women make up the majority of students enrolled in colleges and universities, yet leadership positions in higher education have not been a strong area for women. Hence, it is important to look at the issues of how, where, and why these gendered organizations that could serve as agents of change and advocacy for women are preventing women from reaching executive positions where many of the decisions for institutional changes are made.

Leadership as Empowerment: Women's experiences and perspectives

In their 2009 study, Bower and Wolverton examined the leadership styles, stories, reflections, and paths that led to positions of leadership of seven African American women who they referred to as minority women leaders of color. These African American women had been the first woman, the first African American, or both in a position of authority. The main points of this study look at the how these female minority leaders overcome the dual impediment of racism and sexism that can hamper the professional achievement of African American women, mainly as they move in the direction of the pinnacle of their professional careers. One major contribution of this study relates to the current significance of national demographics, which indicate a high turnover in college leadership due to retiring executive leadership. Second, this study supports the national trend indicating a very slight increase of women emerging in more leadership positions. This work relates to information of other women studies regarding challenges of females in high leadership positions and confirms Weisman and Vaughan's (2007) study (as cited in Eddy, 2010) that the most critical position leading to the presidency is that of chief academic officer - even though ACE's 2009 study, indicated that still only 15% of college presidents were female CAO's, a limited gain for these leaders. These studies relate to information of other women studies regarding challenges faced by females in leadership positions in higher education.

In a qualitative and phenomenological study, Bright (2010) interviewed 14 African American women administrators by conducting in-depth semi-structured interviews to explore the leadership experiences of African American women administrators in community colleges. The focus of Bright's research revolved around how these women made meaning of their lives, with attention to how these women managed their biculturality while working at conventionally White community college institutions. . Based on the women leaders' personal reflections of

their experiences, seven themes emerged around aspirations, challenges, supports, and the navigation of complex experiences. Similar to Bower and Wolverton study (2009) of minority, Black women leaders, this study also used qualitative, narrative approach with reflections of participants on their positions of leadership similar to this study's phenomenological multicasel approach to examine critical learning moment phenomena.

Another recent study by Cejda (2008) highlighted women leaders' experiences in the community college setting based on their experiences and perspectives. Cejda's study focused on six women in upper level chief academic officer (CAO) positions in community colleges. In addition to in-depth interviews, Cejda also used follow-up conversations to explore the particular challenges the women experienced in obtaining a CAO position at a community college. In this study, there was emphasis on the individual experience—the personal development of the skills and abilities to be successful in their positions. While this study focused more on best practices for would-be and new CAOs and their future career plans, it did not compare leadership styles or experiences between males and females.

Similar to Cejda's study (2008), another qualitative study by Krause (2009) also examined perspectives of women presidents and CAOs at two-year colleges. Krause focused on leadership development of women two-year college senior leaders and the mentoring roles of women community college presidents and CAOs. This study's findings indicated that women who aspired to upper-level academic positions needed to complete their terminal degree, develop strong networks, work closely with mentors, and take advantage of leadership training in terminal degree or professional training programs. Moreover, similar to Bower and Wolverton's study (2009), Krause addressed the pending shortage and frequent turnover of higher education leaders, the leadership development of women as senior leaders, and the paths these women took

to the position of college presidents or CAOs. I especially appreciated the significance of Krause's position on the importance of creating a diverse pool of leaders, specifically preparing women with skills that qualify them for higher and more advanced positions. In studying the perspectives of women presidents and CAOs in community colleges through interviews and within a theoretical framework of action, this study has many similarities to my own.

Critical Learning Moments for Women Executive Leaders

While research has previously focused on leadership at four-year and two-year institutions, little has been studied about female executive leadership at two-year public institutions in the state of California in the aftermath of the "Great Recession's" storm and external forces that continue to confront them in their leadership roles (Brown, 2013; CCCCCO, 2013; CF, 2013; Kirsch et al., 2007). To address the lack of empirical literature on female executive leadership and reform practices, there is a need to explore the meaning of critical learning moments (CLM) in transformative leadership practices of women change agents of two-year public colleges in California.

Critical learning moments (CLM) is a term I have generated to refer to the significant occasions where overall lived leadership experiences intersect with organizational knowledge and leadership styles to convey a meaningful and reflective perspective for transformative systemic reform. These learning moments are crucial to better understand practical approaches in the field which can lead to transformational and systemic institutional reform. This understanding will in turn benefit all stakeholders, including practitioners, policymakers, academicians, and future researchers in the field of educational leadership and reform. Indeed, how women executive leader change agents make meaning of their experiences can help link practical approaches in the field of leadership and abstract conceptual leadership theories within today's

context of community colleges reform in higher education institutions (AACC, 2012; ACE, 2012; Shultz, 2001).

In my research, I found a single reference on how school leaders have gained knowledge from leadership experiences by framing crisis as the impetus for transformation. Ackerman and Maslin-Ostrowski (2010), in their book, *The Wounded Leader*, conducted iterative qualitative studies with principals who have been hurt or wounded in the field by emotional or other crises on the job as the phenomenon of interest. By using a phenomenological approach, Ackerman and Maslin-Ostrowski (2010) findings contribute to the field of storytelling or case stories and illustrate that narratives of the challenges leaders face in due course enlighten and reveal who they are, with the most successful leaders being the authentic ones. By framing “crisis [as] an emergent occasion for transformation” (p. 129), Maslin-Ostrowski and Ackerman (2010) expose how leaders can be altered enough to gain knowledge but also grow from their leadership wounds. Even though the participants of this study are secondary school leaders, mainly principals of high schools, this work contributes to my research since it is interesting to note that it is during times of change and crisis that leadership emerges and that the authors used research methods that will be similar to my own study, through a phenomenological narrative form in the qualitative research tradition.

Transformative Organizational Change, Community Colleges, and Women’s Leadership

In navigating the vast literature on transformative theories and models of organizational change and institutional reform, I explored what is essential for women executives, a growing yet significantly underrepresented segment in higher education, to lead educational reform in their colleges by instituting systemic organizational change. For loosely coupled social systems, such as community colleges, second-order, paradigmatic change is necessary for full transformation

(Eagly, 2005; Eddy, 2010; Kezar, 2001). That is, a college's organizational purpose, policies, structure, and practices must experience fundamental change and to do so the organization's "worldview—the organizational philosophy, beliefs, values, structure, policies, operations, and often unconscious presuppositions—must change" (Levy & Merry, 1986, p. 10; in Townsend & Twombly, 1988, p. 77).

Indeed, the field of leadership practice within organizational change and educational reform has consistently shown that leadership challenges result from a lack of a collaborative and participative leadership approach toward organizational change (Kotter, 1995; Lencioni, 2002; Malm, 2008; Martin, 2008; Miligan, 2010; Northouse, 2012; Pflanz, 2011; Senge, 1990; van Engen & Willemssen, 2004; Wheatley, 2006; Wheelan, 2010). It is essential to understand how systemic second-tier change is initiated, managed and institutionalized in different cycles of pressures that have faced these fluid, learning organizations (Kezar, 2001; Kotter, 1995; Northouse, 2012; Senge, 1990; Wheatley, 2006).

Within the last decade, we learned that best practices for executive leaders to manage institutional restructuring processes need to be inclusive and adaptive, ethical, require the cultivation of and support for employee feedback loops, and the development of communication networks for essential procedures (Johnson, 2009; Kezar, 2001; Kotter, 1995; Northouse, 2012; Senge, 1990; Wheatley, 2006; Wheelan, 2010). These are essential in community colleges, which are loosely-coupled organizations where autonomy and shared governance is valued by employees, staff, and faculty alike (Kezar, 2001; Rosenbaum, Deil-Amen, & Person, 2006). Successful reform initiatives for full transformative change are characterized by a long-term, second-tiered, whole-systems approach which is typically introduced by executive leadership but

has to involve all stakeholders for successful implementation (Burns, 2005; Kezar, 2001, Malm, 2008; Northouse, 2012; Senge, 1990; Wheatley, 2006).

In studying the implications of chaos, complexity theory for leadership and change in community colleges reveals that we need to critically evaluate educational reform proposals and change effort against the backdrop of a foundation in practical knowledge (Kotter, 1995; Kezar, 2001; Wheatley, 2006). Furthermore, from these scholars within the field of organizational change, we learn that with diseconomies of scale, due to limited resources, state funding limitations, and the size of the college campus, the old ways of doing things in the traditional, directive leadership setup does not work (Kezar, 2001, Levy & Merry, 1986; Northouse, 2012; Wheatley, 2006). For an emergent, adaptive and self-organizing model of institutional change to emerge, it is necessary for highly visible and innovative change agents to promote whole system, interactive processes such as information sharing, networking, and support structures for employees and future leaders (Kezar, 2001; Northouse, 2012; Wheatley, 2006). These change agent leaders are truly transformational and not afraid to “stir the pot” for the encouragement and fostering of new ideas and work collaboratively with others towards a shared vision (Burns, 2005; Kezar, 2001; Kotter, 1995; Malm, 2008, 2012; Senge, 1990, 2006).

Yet organizations, including traditional community colleges institutions, are more likely to support instrumental leadership styles. Tedrow and Rhodes (1999) explored and analyzed three leadership responses: women’s leadership identity, communication style, and gender issues. They found that senior women executive leaders in community colleges largely constructed their leadership style and identity as a response to organizational experiences and norms identified by typical male instrumental roles and behaviors. Consequently, women who enact more egalitarian or relational leadership styles of leadership are likely to face marginality

within hierarchically structured organizations and may be marked as outsiders (Cook, 2012; Milligan, 2010; Nolen-Hoeksema, 2010; Tedrow & Rhodes, 1999; Townsend & Twombly, 2007). It is therefore no wonder that despite a high percentage of women involved in low-level administrative work, the percentage of women at senior level leadership positions continues to be proportionately smaller (ACE, 2012; Eddy, 2010; Cook, 2012; Pflanz, 2011; Milligan, 2010; USDE, 2012).

Similar to other studies of women in higher education and community college institutions (Bower & Wolverton, 2009; Bright, 2010; Cejda, 2008, Milligan, 2012; Tedrow & Rhoads, 1999), Eddy and Cox (2008) pointed to the urgent need for community colleges to examine gendered practices in order to facilitate a move toward a less structurally gendered institute. Eddy and Cox's (2008) study uncovered that the organizational structure in community colleges is still based on male norms. As gendered organizations (Acker, as cited in Eddy, 2010), community colleges add ongoing processes and barriers for women.

The concept of gender is a social construction (i.e., the meaning that is developed through social interactions that take place not only on an individual level but also part of larger organizational interactions in multiple levels along the structural hierarchy of traditional community college organizations; Eddy, 2010). As Eddy (2010) described:

When individuals act in a manner that is inconsistent with the social construction and expectations of their gender, they can be penalized. For example, assertive or dominant women are often viewed as bitchy or aggressive (even though a man acting in the same way may be rewarded for his decisive leadership) because her actions are not part of the prescribed gender role . . . and when male norms serve as the measure for good leadership, women are placed in a bind. (p. 123)

Eddy and Cox (2008) recommended that building a school from the ground up may offer one a means to get beyond the gendered, hierarchical structured institute. A second option for breaking away from deep-rooted patterns of behaviors is through institutional partnerships (Eddy & Cox, 2008). Interestingly, given previously mentioned studies on women's collaborative style of leadership can perhaps further explain this inclination towards partnerships given collaborations may provide the root or foundation for a way of rethinking control and leadership roles.

Research on gender and leadership styles have found gender differences; for example, studies have shown that women lead in more of a transformational style, using a more participative and democratic method (Eagly, Johannesen-Schmidt & van Engen, 2005; Nolen-Hoeksema, 2010; Northouse, 2012; Pflanz, 2011). The research shows that females are more likely to use adaptive and emergent leadership behaviors that are associated with contemporary notions of effective leadership toward reform (Eagly et al., 2005; Eddy 2010; Eddy & Cox, 2008; Iverson, 2009; Krause, 2009; McGee Banks, 2007; McKinney & Morris, 2010; Northouse, 2012; Pflanz, 2011). While researching in what ways women are more likely to use transformational leadership behaviors and emergent and adaptive styles of leadership within the body of theoretical framework of change, I discovered another gap where scholars of change theories and models fall short in fully explaining why, how, and in what ways women are more likely to use transformational leadership behaviors, along with the more emergent and adaptive styles of women within the body of theoretical framework of change. Since one of the goals of this critical research is to create a catalyst for discussions toward social and gender inequality and reform, this gap helps provide a rationale for this study to further explore, through the critical feminist framework, how women executives utilize transformative leadership practices and behaviors for systemic reform in the nation's largest sector of higher education, the community colleges.

Theoretical Framework: Leadership Style Theory within a Critical Feminist Framework

I will use a multi-theoretical lens to merge leadership theories and models related to adaptive and emergent female styles of transformative leadership with critical feminist theory to explore what meaning women executive leaders ascribe to critical learning moments in their leadership practice toward systemic organizational change. At the heart of my research questions and purpose are why this is worth studying and what are the implications for educational leadership and best practices for generating and maintaining long-term institutional reform. This study's larger implications for future researchers include examining how these concepts apply to systemic reform for social justice and equity in policy for under-represented leaders. Scholars of change theories and models fall short in fully explaining why, how, and in what ways women are more likely to use transformational leadership behaviors, along with the more emergent and adaptive styles of women within the body of theoretical framework of change. Research has revealed that women tend to enact different ways of leading than men (Caliper Corporation, 2005; Costello, 2012; Pflanz, 2011; Eagly, 2005; Eagly, Johannesen-Schmidt, & van Engen, 2005; Ginsberg & Wlodkowski, 2009; Eddy, 2008, 2010; Eddy & Cox, 2008; Lattuca & Stark, 2009; Malm, 2008; Miligan, 2010; van Engen & Willemsen, 2004; Martin, 2008). Studies on gender and leadership style have found differences, and various studies have shown that women indeed lead in more of a transformational style; they tend to lead in more participative and democratic styles than do men (Costello, 2012; Eagly, et al., 2005; Eddy & Cox, 2008; Ginsberg & Wlodkowski, 2009; Leatherwood & Williams, 2008; Miligan, 2010; Northouse, 2012; Pflanz, 2011; van Engen & Willemsen, 2004).

Multiple studies also point to issues of gender and sexism facing women leaders. However, since many low- and middle-tier management leaders in California two-year colleges

are women, and female executive leadership is at a higher percentage in two-year institutions than in universities and private colleges, it is often assumed that, due to this ‘over representation’ of female students and leaders in higher education, gender must not be significant and does not have to be explored with a critical eye (Eddy, 2010; Milligan, 2010; Tedrow & Rhodes, 1999). This leads to limited exposure of these issues in national discourse about community colleges. Indeed, previous empirical research findings and evidence have shown that organizational barriers do exist that limit women’s mobility in higher learning institutions and, thus, restrict their ability to access executive leadership positions (Bright, 2010; Bower, & Wolverton, 2009; Cejda, 2008; Cook, 2012; Chin, 2004; Eagly & Johnson, 1990; Eddy & Cox, 2008; Eddy, 2010; Hopewell et al., 2009; Krause, 2009; Miligan, 2010; Nolan-Hoeksema, 2010; Pflanz, 2001; Townsend & Twombly, 2007; Weisman & Vaughan, 2007; van Engen & Willemsen, 2004).

Women’s Transformational Leadership Styles: Best Suited for Educational Systemic Reform

The leadership style theories which I merge with critical feminism to form this study’s conceptual framework focus on adaptive and emergent styles of female leadership. Research has shown that there are fewer women leaders in higher education and women lead differently than men (Costello, 2012; Eagly, et al., 2005; Eddy & Cox, 2008; Ginsberg & Wlodkowski, 2009; Leatherwood & Williams, 2008; Miligan, 2010; Northouse, 2012; Pflanz, 2011; van Engen & Willemsen, 2004). For instance, women have a more collaborative leadership style than men (Northouse, 2012) and numerous research findings on gender and leadership style show that “gender differences found across settings was that women led in a more democratic, or participative, manner than men” (Eagly & Johnson, 1990). These findings not only point to the prejudice women experience in leadership positions, but they also indicate that women’s greater

use of democratic style appears to be adaptive in that they are using the style that produces the most favorable evaluations (Northouse, 2012; van Engen & Willemsen, 2004).

In more recent empirical research, findings supports gender differences in leadership style and effectiveness, with females more likely to use transformational leadership behaviors and contingent rewards associated with contemporary notions of effective leadership (Eddy, 2008, 2010; Miligan, 2010; Northouse, 2012). A meta-analysis examining research between 1987 and 2000 found comparable results (van Engen & Willemsen, 2004). With regard to the female presidents' leadership style, Milligan's (2010) study found that women presidents' leadership styles were characterized by openness, collaboration, and confidence.

In another qualitative leadership study of women's experiences in community college leadership positions, Tedrow and Rhodes (1999) found that women have more of a relational style of leading compared to men and are more likely to embrace an instrumental approach. The study suggests that most cultures expect women to use nurturing behavioral styles. Krause (2009) analyzed the development of women community college presidents and chief academic officers. The study's findings indicated that women who aspired to upper-level academic positions learned to develop strong networks, worked closely with mentors, and took advantage of leadership trainings.

Critical and Feminist Paradigm: Social Justice Platform as Catalyst for Change in Traditionally Structured Community College Institutions

The critical theory paradigm, also known as advocacy or participatory framework, focuses on social justice to address inequality (Creswell, as cited in Bloomberg & Volpe, 2012). Perspectives within the paradigm include research strategies "such as narrative analysis that are openly ideological and have empowering and democratizing goals" (Bloomberg & Volpe, 2012,

p. 29). In reconceptualizing this study through this framework, the focus was to provide a platform for community college women executives to voice their experiences and critical learning moments in their leadership practice.

The goal of this critical research study is to create a catalyst for discussions on social and gender inequality and reform. The term critical refers to “the detecting and unmasking of beliefs and practices that limit human freedom, justice, and democracy” (Usher, as cited in Glesne, 2006, p. 16). Critical and feminist research perspectives are increasingly influencing qualitative research; “both begin with explicit ideological frameworks and both interpret finding based on particular theoretical perspectives” (p. 16). Chin’s (2004) study identifies some challenges faced by women in leadership positions and defined leadership as empowerment from a feminist perspective as “promoting feminist principles and policies, changing organizational cultures to be more gender equitable, and empowering women as feminist leaders” (p. 7).

In another study on the perspectives of female leaders through a feminist lens, Pflanz’s (2011) explored the common features in the paths of women who attained leadership positions to better understand the effectiveness of female community leaders. Her study’s implications for career advancement, gender stereotyping, and role models for women in leadership capacities. Findings provides further evidence that even though the leadership norm continues to be male-oriented, more women are occupying positions of leadership in our society and the need to explore how effectively they lead reform in their institutions.

Consequently, feminists believe that organizational change is central to improving the condition of women and that without change, women’s social, political, and economic conditions will continue to be unequal to men’s and women will not have a significant voice in the power structures that drive society; therefore, “the kind of change that feminists envision is not mere

tinkering but requires a paradigmatic shift, a breaking out of the mold of patriarchal thinking” (Levy & Merry, 1986; Townsend & Twombly, 1998, p. 78). For this research study, the criticality lies not with only the change processes in community colleges in California, but also in a dialogue of change in the existing institutional organizational structures. Community colleges are highly patriarchal, traditional institutions, yet, they are loosely coupled, extremely team- and collaboratively oriented organizations (Eddy, 2010; Kezar, 2001; Townsend & Twombly, 1988). Thus, successful reform initiatives must involve leadership practices involving all stakeholders in a shared governance process characterized by whole-systems change (Burns, 2005; Kezar, 2001, Malm, 2008; Northouse, 2012; Senge, 1990; Wheatley, 2006). Full systemic reform improvements—characterized by long-term, second-tiered, whole-systems change—must engage a transformative practice approach by leaders attempting paradigmatic shifts toward successful reform initiatives in traditional male-dominated organizations (Burns, 2005; Chin 2004; Kezar, 2001, Malm, 2008; Northouse, 2012; Senge, 1990; Wheatley, 2006).

Moreover, conventional organization theories and even recent scholars of theoretical change models fail to offer an ample lens for examining executive women’s leadership style since they fall short in providing (a) justification of how gender is a cultural force; (b) evidence to reveal the crucial issues and problems that women face in organizational contexts in their executive positions during their leadership practice toward organizational reform; (c) an explanation as to how, why, and in what ways women leaders are more likely to use transformational leadership behaviors and innovative practices toward systemic reform during crisis and in its aftermath in stages of relative stability or growth.

Summary and Conclusion

In summary, the literature review of this study situates the context of previous research, presents critical synthesis of empirical literature according to three relevant themes discovered, and justifies how the study addresses a gap in the literature. This study is important in terms of what we currently know and do not know about female executive leaders in two-year community college institutions. There is a need to explore the meaning of critical learning moments in the lived experiences of female executive leaders of two-year public colleges. Currently, there is a gap in the body of empirical and practical knowledge about best practices for leading systemic reform during unprecedented converging and mounting external forces that confront contemporary leaders.

This chapter delimits the literature review to the analysis of three major themes related to female leadership and community college reform and examines 1) literature within leadership and community college reform initiatives, 2) gender, education and leadership, and 3) change theories and models related to adaptive and emergent female styles of leadership. The conceptual framework justifies the rationale for addressing the gap in empirical literature on critical learning moments for women executive leaders. Through a multi-theoretical lens this study's conceptual framework will merge concepts of female leadership style theories related to transformative change and critical feminism to better understand and explore critical learning moments and, in particular, what meaning female executive leaders ascribe to critical learning moments from their overall leadership practice toward transformative systemic change.

This study will attempt to fill a gap by developing a better understanding of the complexities of what contemporary female executive leaders' experiences are first-hand by inquiring into her lived history and a specific phenomenon of interest: critical learning moments

in order to shed light about the meaning of the female executive leaders' lived experiences through a reflective dialogue. Implications of this study relate to stakeholders in the field of educational reform and leadership practice. By advancing the knowledge of a new profile of contemporary women leadership toward organizational change in two-year institutions future researchers and practitioners in education and policy can better understand current leadership experiences and best practices in the field toward systemic reform.

The projected outcomes of this research project will contribute to new knowledge and practices in the fields of educational leadership and reform. The significance of this project lies in my intent to better understand how women executives are leading systemic organizational change especially in times of disequilibrium and chaos, its aftermath, and during ensuing periods of stability and growth. In examining the meaning of critical learning moments of women executive leaders at community colleges the contributions of this study relate to a) trends which indicate a serious leadership vacuum due to retiring presidents, b) the significant overall presence of women in community colleges yet the ongoing disparity in higher and executive leadership positions, and c) the urgent pressures and calls for transformative reform of our two-year institutions of higher education by national, state, and regional authorities.

The significance of this project relates to the fields of educational leadership and institutional reform practices and how women executive leaders utilize transformative, innovative change practices to lead their campuses to systemic reform. By understanding how they manage their colleges and adapt their leadership style to meet the needs of their institutions and stakeholders, future practitioners and policy makers will be able to better understand current leadership experiences. Through the critical lens of women executive leaders the data findings from this study will attempt to shed light on how transformative change can best be instituted in

diverse, two-year colleges facing a multitude of pressures in today's context of higher education to improve educational policy and practice.

Chapter 3: Methodology

Introduction

The purpose of this phenomenological research case study was to explore the meaning of experiences of women female executive leaders at California community colleges, to better understand the essence of critical learning moments in their transformational-leadership practice. In exploring what meaning community college women executive leaders ascribe to critical learning moments, I aimed to understand how they are leading transformative organizational change in their institutions through a narrative form in a multicase phenomenological case-study approach.

This chapter addresses the research paradigm and describes the qualitative methodological tradition about this research topic and its context and provides a rationale for this study's approach. The chapter progresses, situating the study and describing the research approach used with the rationale for its suitability to address the research questions and the study's design by describing and justifying the selection of the research setting. In describing the study's research sample and data sources, I explain and provide the rationale for the type of sample used and how participants were selected.

In the instruments and procedures section, I describe and justify the type of instrument used and explain the concepts measured. In the data-collection section, I describe and justify the data-collection methods and procedures. The data-analysis segment addresses methods used for analysis in this study with further discussion of measures taken to enhance study validity. In the role of the researcher section, I explain the plan and conduct of the study and make explicit the researcher assumptions, beliefs, and biases.

Phenomenological Case-Study Research Design

For this study, I used a phenomenological case-study research design. A case-study approach is advantageous in researching a specific organizational process and allowing the researcher to explore impact at the institutional level in great depth and detail (McKinney & Morris, 2010). This approach served this study's purpose to better understand how women leaders have implemented organizational-change processes during challenging times in their institutions of higher learning. According to Rossman and Rallis (2003), case studies are "in-depth detailed explorations of single examples of an event, process, organization, group, or individual" (p. 104). In this case study, I reflected on some special features typically associated with case studies in general: (a) particularistic, (b) descriptive, and (c) heuristic (Merriam, 2009). This study was particularistic, focusing on a particular situation, event, program, or phenomenon, and helped solve practical problems (Merriam, 2009).

Next, this study was descriptive, resulting in rich, thick description of the phenomena I studied (Merriam, 2009). By using longer, individual, in-depth, sequenced interviews as my primary data source, the study focused on the thick descriptive narratives from first-hand accounts of women executive leaders (Bloomberg & Volpe, 2012; Creswell, 1996). Finally, this study is heuristic in that I, as the researcher and the reader of the study, experienced learning and an expansion of knowledge on the issue (Bloomberg & Volpe, 2012; Merriam, 2009). This knowledge and awareness resulted from the focus of the study's research questions, through which I examined lived experiences and leadership practices to better understand the perspective of women executive leaders in California community colleges and districts.

In a case-study framework, this study followed the phenomenological-research tradition, which focuses "on the meaning of a phenomenon, particularly one that elicits the essence of

experiences directs one to a phenomenological study” (Schram, 2006, p. 78). Stake (1995) stressed the benefits of a qualitative case-study methodology arising from its emphasis on the uniqueness of each particular case and the educator’s subjective experience of that case. Hence, the implications of the phenomenological research tradition for the research methods served not only to connect to my study’s purpose but also served to aid me in describing critical learning moments in executive women’s leadership experiences, what they have endured in the process, and what approaches they have used to lead change in their institutions.

Because the purpose of phenomenological research is “to investigate the meaning of the lived experience of people to identify the core essence of human experience or phenomena as described by research participants,” this research adhered to this research tradition and involved “studying a small number of subjects through extensive and prolonged engagements to develop patterns and relations of meaning” (Bloomberg & Volpe, 2012, p. 32; Moustakas, 1994). Rooted in the philosophical perspectives of Husserl and Heidegger, phenomenology’s basic purpose is to reduce individual experiences with a phenomenon to a description of its universal essence (Bloomberg & Volpe 2012; Van Manen, 1990).

Therefore, by capturing first-hand accounts from the leaders’ perspectives on their lived experiences and organizational-change processes, this multisite case-study approach to analyze community colleges in California examined contemporary leadership experiences and practices of women executive leaders. This framework loaned itself well to the focus of this study to better understand the “essence” of women leaders’ experiences to explore critical learning moments as the central phenomenon in their overall leadership practices (Bloomberg & Volpe, 2012; Creswell, 1996; Miles & Huberman, 1994; Rossman & Rallis, 2003).

Research Setting and Context

Site demographics. I pursued a multiple-case sampling strategy because this study involved more than one case-study site. I conducted this research study at two California community colleges and two districts that I purposefully chose based on the participants: women executive leaders who are known change agents and have transformed their institutions. One of the colleges is in the largest district of 2-year institutions, with 2.6 million students attending 112 colleges (CCCCO, 2013). Basin College (pseudonym), an ethnically diverse campus in the largest community college district in the nation, is located in southern California. Its enrollment figures, as of fall 2012, exceeded 20,000, ranking the school the third largest in the district.

Similar to the demographics of the surrounding areas, the college's student profile consists of more than 50% Latino students, with the majority of the total student population being women (nearly 60%). This younger student population (close to 60% under the age of 25), who attend part-time (over 70%), have transfer (approximately 40%) and vocational (nearly 30%) educational goals at Basin College (2012). The second college, Mountain College (pseudonym), one of the fastest growing 2-year institutions in the nation, serves over 23,000 students; it is in the same region as Basin College but serves a different demographic population of students. This setting enrolls mostly a White student population; Latino/Hispanic students make up almost 40% of the student body. The median age at this setting is around 20, with slightly more women than men enrolling in the last 3 consecutive years.

Sites' historical and contextual backgrounds.

Mountain College. In the span of 40 years, Mountain College has been transformed from a small community college serving several hundred students into one of the nation's fastest growing, large community colleges (those with more than 10,000 students) in the past 4 decades.

Mountain College's growth is due to change and significant progress throughout the area, which has propelled the college forward by a combination of the community's growth and a vision to transform the institution into "the best community college in the country." The college's website indicates continual growth in enrollment is expected to rise to almost 30,000 students, surpassing projections well ahead of schedule. This sort of growth has demanded flexibility and innovation and created demands for new academic and occupational programs, and training partnerships with business and industry, and the facilities to house them.

Most of the college's square footage has been added during the tenure of the Darlene Huntersail (a pseudonym for the Superintendent-President). The result was a seemingly nonstop series of construction projects that continues today; one that has dramatically changed the college's face and character. The college was housed in eight major buildings in 1988, including the major stadium; within 10 years of the leader's arrival, another 10 major structures had been built, among them the grand performing arts center, a library, four major halls, an early childhood and family-studies education center, a science laboratory, and an entirely new campus in the same valley.

During this period, academic and occupational offerings were vastly expanded. The college offered associate in arts and science degrees in over 60 academic programs, as well as credentials in almost 70 certificate programs. Academic programs range from animation to television, film, and video production, from audio/radio production to video game animation, from biotechnology to theatre arts, from child development to paralegal studies, and from dance to industrial manufacturing. Mountain College's institutional philosophy is to educate the body and the mind; by helping meet students' needs, the school's regional location has been

historically supportive, in a generous community that has approved requests for bond funding for capital construction projects.

The most recent bond measure was approved by voters in the last 7 years, providing over \$100 million in general-obligation bond funding to pay for the next big wave of expansion and modernization projects for Mountain College. This funding allows the college to add more classrooms and laboratories; build permanent facilities and equip classrooms at the new campus; upgrade technology to expand instruction in public-safety and other high-demand professions; and improve earthquake, security, and fire safety. The locally generated funds also helped the district secure as much as \$80 million in additional state matching funds.

The college participates in several innovative partnerships that have redefined the traditional role of community colleges. Academy of the Mountains, operated by the local high school district, opened at Mountain College in the early 2000s and allows promising high school students to attend high school and college concurrently. A Department of Commerce grant of \$1.3 million helped fund the Center for Applied Competitive Technologies and the Employee Training Institute at Mountain College, both of which have helped local businesses become more efficient and train employees in the latest emerging fields. In partnership with Mountain Memorial Hospital, the college operates the Clinical Education Center at the hospital; its Biotechnology Center provides a 2,000-square-foot clean room in partnership with the Mann Biomedical Park.

Basin College. Basin College is a 2-year public college located in southern California. The college's mission is to offer transfer education, job training, and lifelong learning to residents of its valley and beyond. Basin is one of nine colleges in its district and is fully accredited by the Accrediting Commission for Community and Junior Colleges, which is part of

the Western Association of Schools and Colleges, a nationally recognized accrediting agency. Founded in the late 1940s, Basin College sits on more than 100-acres in a Los Angeles suburb. It is a urban oasis with a beautiful park-like campus with over 1,600 trees and plants, and is one of the first community college in California to earn a Tree Campus USA designation.

Under the leadership of its female President, Sara Schenectady, Basin College is one of the leading community colleges in the state and a Hispanic-serving institution, servicing approximately 20,000 students. President Schenectady's other accomplishments include reducing the college deficit by \$4 million dollars in a 6-month period, implementing the college's new master plan, and reaching out to the local business community and elected officials.

Basin College is a student-focused campus known for its high-quality educational courses that prepare its graduates for university or vocational work. Students receive the benefits of taking general-education courses for less than \$50 per unit; many students choose to take their general-education courses at Basin and then transfer to leading private and public colleges and universities. Basin College students have transferred to the University of California at Los Angeles, the University of Southern California, the University of Phoenix, the University of California at Berkeley, the University of California at Santa Barbara, California State University at Los Angeles, and California State University at Northridge. Furthermore, according to the college's website, students who transfer from Basin have been known to do better at the University of California at Los Angeles than students who start there as freshmen. Furthermore, Basin College offer more than 100 associate-degree programs and certificate programs. Popular majors include accounting, administration of justice, biology, business management, child development, computer science information technology, engineering, English, liberal arts & sciences, media arts, music, psychology, and sociology.

The school is also known for exceptional vocational programs in registered nursing, fire technology, and respiratory therapy. In addition, Basin College offers a wide selection of online and hybrid courses, and accelerated evening and weekend courses for working adults. The college serves as a hub for cultural and community events, and is home to a symphony orchestra, historical museum, and an art gallery, and regularly hosts a variety of concerts, plays, and community activities. In addition, the campus pool and stadium track are accessible to the public during scheduled times. The campus is currently undergoing an expansion and renovation project (an undertaking of over \$620 million) funded by bonds and supported by the voters of Los Angeles. Improvements to existing buildings are being completed, along with constructing several new buildings that will serve Basin students for years to come. Other upcoming construction projects include a new performing and media arts center, a student union center, community services center, athletic training facility, and a workforce development and administration gateway building.

Research-Site Selection

My research purpose drove decisions for site selection for this study. In seeking a better understanding of the lived experiences of female higher education leaders through the phenomenological genre of the qualitative-research tradition, I wanted to learn how female leaders make meaning of their experiences in light of their history. I selected the research sites because the women executives I identified by network and critical sampling strategies served several of this study's purposes (Miles & Huberman, 1994). My site selections related to my research tradition of phenomenology because my interest lay in the study of women leaders' experiences and how they articulate and make deep meaning through reflective dialogue about these experiences (Creswell, 2012; Rossman & Rallis, 2003; Sokolowski, 2000). I used

purposeful-sampling techniques through a personal network of academic contacts, informants, and pilot-study participants who worked with or knew the female leaders of these sites.

Site Access and Researcher Roles

I gained access to the sites by contacting the gatekeepers at the sites by e-mail and telephone correspondences, once I identified the women leaders. I gained access to participants through a process of approvals, institutional processes, gatekeepers, and by continual negotiations with the leaders' schedules (Bloomberg & Volpe, 2012; Miles & Huberman, 1994). I established and maintained a good rapport with gatekeepers, executive secretaries, and chiefs of staff at each college. The role of the gatekeepers was important to my access to these busy female executive leaders. There was no general consensus on a "gatekeeper format"; rather, the gatekeeper's role is a standard feature of qualitative inquiry. In addition, my multiple roles as researcher, writer, leader, and student were discussed and negotiated at the onset of research with gatekeepers and participants at each site. In describing how I defined my roles as a female a doctoral student and researcher, with knowledge and professional experience in leadership practice and administration, the foundations of confidence and implications for building trust about research design and methods was established with each research participant (Glesne, 2011). These interactions between women leaders and me, and the role of power and authority, were considered (Glesne, 2011; Northouse, 2010).

Data Sources and Sample

Data identification: Source, type, and method. The main sources of data for this phenomenological case study included women executive leaders - district chancellor, college superintendent-president, college president, and vice president in community colleges and districts in California. All participants were chosen based on purposeful, criterion, network, or

chain sampling strategies. Accordingly, transcribed audiotaped personal interviews of first-hand narrative accounts of their experiences in their leadership practice were the main sources of data. I used first-hand accounts to understand critical learning moments and the essence of their leadership experiences, in light of their overall lived histories, to explore critical learning moments that were meaningful in their leadership practice for organizational change and systemic reform.

Sampling approach and participant-selection strategies. I used a mixed sampling strategy to select participants for my study—criteria and network sampling—to identify four female executive leaders as my data sources. Each participant had 10 or more years of experience in senior leadership positions in public higher education, was over the age of 40, held a graduate academic degree, and currently led a large and ethnically diverse urban institution: a public, 2-year community college or district in California. In a phenomenological study, “criterion-based sampling” is employed because it “works well when all the individuals studied represent people who have experienced the same phenomenon” (Bloomberg & Volpe, 2012, p. 104). In addition to criterion sampling, I used a network-sampling strategy with participants referred to me from individuals who knew leaders who met my research interests (Glesne, 2006). This sampling strategy was appropriate for this study’s purpose and research question: to gain a better understanding of the meaning of women leaders’ experiences currently in California higher education institutions. In adhering to Seidman’s (2006) advice on selecting participants, I acknowledged that my task as a researcher in this endeavor was to present the experience of the people I interviewed in “compelling detail and in sufficient depth [such] that those who read the study can connect to that experience, learn how it is constituted, and deepen their understanding of the issues it reflects” (p. 51).

Criteria included that participants must be women executive leaders, known change agents who've led transformational reform in their 2-year community college or district institutions. I used purposeful-sampling techniques through a network of contacts (including academics and professors in educational-leadership programs, and those who work in the community college sector), informants, and pilot-study participants (other and former presidents of community colleges) who suggested colleagues and associates that then enabled me to select sites with female executives identified by those who worked with or knew these women as "change agents" in their field. Some of the specific reform initiatives they've implemented to bring their colleges and district to reform included scaling-up innovations to improve student outcomes and programs, their organization, and district/system performance. Others transformative changes included developmental education reform, external partnerships to increase revenue, competency-based curriculum, credit for prior learning, online education and Open Educational Resources, and intensive student support strategies.

Researcher's role. My professional interests continue to be in leadership positions in education. As a female faculty member and administrator in the field of education, I aimed to contribute to the field of higher education practice by learning from best practices in leading institutional reform and to add to the field of policy studies. My background in social justice and advocacy for women's rights laid the foundation for continual development on larger globalization initiatives to better serve female education in underdeveloped regions of the world.

I plan to use my professional expertise in networking with global partners to enhance the education and leadership skills of women and girls in least developed countries (LDC). Furthermore, by using educational-leadership skills learned in this doctoral program, I plan to train in higher educational pedagogy with local project engagement to support emerging female

leaders in government, business, and civil societies in LDCs by assisting their efforts toward the advancement of women's and girls' education, building leadership skills, and initiating educational technology.

Participant recruitment. The approach I used for participant recruitment at each site involved the following process: First, after initial purposeful criterion and network sampling, I contacted the gatekeepers at each college; these are typically the secretaries or chiefs of staff. I contacted them by telephone to introduce myself as a doctoral-student researcher in an educational-leadership department of a 4-year public institution, conducting a study on female executive leaders. After initial discussion of who referred me to these women executive leaders, I provided my contact referrals' names, names of other leaders, and practitioners who assisted me in identifying them.

Upon the gatekeeper's recommendation, I followed up by sending the leader of each institution an e-mail introducing myself; outlining the purpose of my study, its problem, and the importance of gaining a better understanding of their experiences, in addition to any other information the gatekeeper deemed necessary. The e-mail included a summary of my research and provided participants with details of the study, including information regarding their involvement, assurance of anonymity, time commitment of iterative interviews, member checks of transcripts, and schedules of in-person meetings to ensure accuracy of their accounts during each of two personal interviews with each participant. After initial contact with participants, I then met and conducted the first of several interviews with the women executive leaders.

Sample characteristics. A range of four to six participants in executive-leadership positions was intended to comprise the main data source for this study. They were executive-level leaders who maintained busy schedules, due to their positions leading their colleges at the

executive level. Theory-building analysis was beneficial because this study's research purpose was theoretically driven in the feminist framework and shaped by conceptual questions that explored women's leadership experiences and significant learnable moments through a guided reflective dialogue describing each participant's holistic lived history (Seidman, 2006).

Descriptions of strategies to mitigate potential ethical issues. Because this study focused on executive-level leaders, issues were carefully mitigated for any class or power dynamics. Seidman (2006), who proposed a phenomenological approach to in-depth interviewing, warned that in-depth interviewing with elites may cause an imbalance to occur with unsuspected problems of access, sudden change of schedules, and cutting short of interview times, and even situations where participants may try to take charge of the interviews, "since elites are often accustomed to being in charge of situations in which they find themselves" (pp. 105–106). I intended to cite any ethical issues in my field journal to further protect human subjects (Rossman & Rallis, 2003). Furthermore, in addition to providing a research-consent form, I precluded any difficult field relations from occurring (or at least mitigated them) such as possible power roles by concealing participant identities, and those of their colleges and staff, as further safeguards to maintain ethical standards of sound research practice and for trust-building (Bloomberg & Volpe, 2012).

Data-Collection Instruments

Identification and description of data-collection instruments. I used three instruments to protect human subjects and connect my research data to my conceptual and theoretical frameworks: an e-mail invitation, informed-consent form, and two interview protocols, devised as general conversation guides. These instruments were specifically designed to suit this study's overall purpose: to explore the meaning of experiences for female executive leaders at California

community colleges as a means to better understand the essence of critical learning moments in their leadership practice. The original documents can be found in Appendices A, B, and C at the end of this study.

Description of instruments.

Research invitation and informed-consent form. The research invitation and informed consent form are tools I used to protect participants in this study because they are human subjects; these mechanisms provided an opportunity to protect the confidentiality of research participants and connect data to my theoretical and conceptual framework. My instruments were developed based on information gleaned from research of the literature available on the study of qualitative methodological research practice and approaches and best practices of qualitative-research traditions applied to the field of education leadership in practice.

In the e-mail invitation letter to potential female participants who are currently executive leaders of California community colleges, I provided a brief introduction about me, the purpose of my study, and an outline of what participation would entail, should respondents choose to participate in the study. If I was personally introduced by someone from my network, I included that in the research invitation's introduction. In addition, the overall procedures for the two interviews and the length of participants' time commitment was indicated for the personal interviews, which occurred between June and October 2013. I reiterated and assured participants that their personally identifiable characteristics, such as their name or college, would not appear in my study. I also stressed that their participation in this study was completely voluntary, and that they could withdraw at any time.

The consent forms outlined the purpose of the study, procedures such as how long the interviews would last, and potential risks such as feelings that may arise due to the nature of the

questions, and provided opportunity for participants to refuse to answer any question or discontinue participation at any time. Additionally, the consent form provided information on potential benefits to the educational community and informed participants there would be no personal benefit or compensation for their participation. The consent form indicated that this study might result in greater awareness of the development of participants' own leading experiences, which may facilitate change for them personally. The last sections of the consent form disclosed information indicating how each participant's confidentiality was maintained. The research invitation and informed-consent form can be found in Appendix D of this study.

Interview protocol. The basic purposes of phenomenology is to reduce individual experiences with a phenomenon to a description of the universal essence (Bloomberg & Volpe, 2012; Van Manen, 1990); the basic assumption is that the context and perceptions present evidence. Thus, by using longer, in-depth, sequenced interviews as my primary data source, the study focused on the thick descriptive narratives from first-hand accounts of female executive leaders (Bloomberg & Volpe, 2012; Creswell, 1996). Furthermore, I adapted this research tradition to meet the needs of practical study context (Seidman, 2006). As the main tool for gathering data, two sequenced interview protocols were used with each participant. Because this is a phenomenological study, it was designed to explore the meaning of the lived experience of female executive leaders to learn about the phenomenon of the critical learning moments in their leadership practice (Bloomberg & Volpe, 2012).

This study's interview protocols were devised to explicitly connect the research framework to potential data. I used this study's research questions to develop the interview questions for each protocol. Each interview protocol had a set of questions, many of which were piloted during the pretesting phase of research. Several of the general questions relating to

background, leadership style, and reform efforts were piloted in two previous interviews of community college presidents during the infant stages of dissertation research topic exploration on transformative change agents. Therefore, open-ended questions were better developed, which enabled the development of this study's interview protocols to further explore participants' lived experiences, in addition to their present experiences, so a more holistic perspective could emerge.

Using this holistic approach, this study did not aim for generalizability but rather for better understanding of the stories and experiences of participants, because they are essential to the meaning-making process. By focusing on a phenomenon during each interview, I kept my subjectivity and research roles in check and focused on participants' lived experiences of critical-learning moments (Bloomberg & Volpe, 2012). In doing so, interviewing was the main method of research, which is "at the very heart of what it means to be human" according to Seidman (2006, p. 8). Therefore, in-depth interviewing's purpose

Is not to get answers to questions, nor to test hypotheses, and not to 'evaluate' as the term is normally used. At the root of in-depth interviewing is an interest in understanding the lived experience of other people and the meaning they make of that experience. (pp. 8–9)

Because women executive leaders were interviewed in a one-on-one interview style during the data-collection phase for each of the two interviews, a separate set of interview protocols was developed. The interview protocol included a brief description of the study and a statement of confidentiality, before listing the questions I would ask.

In addition, it was imperative to establish and maintain good relations with women executive leaders by building trust and rapport; I used two interview protocols, 60 and 90 minutes in length, that were personal, intensive, and iterative, to personally interview, discuss

issues, and inquire into the lives of four women leaders' history and life story. This inquiry oriented me and the interviewees to critical learning moments of interest to gain a reflective dialogue about the meaning of the interviewees' experiences in light of each woman's history (Seidman, 1998). Therefore, with respect to this study's design and methods, it was critical to consider relationship-building techniques and devise questions that needed care and time to be considered. My purpose was to discern participants' perspectives and meanings of their own experiences in their lives and how this articulation and reflection empowered women executives in their practices. I queried how they chose to lead their campuses to systemic reform in the current context. I focused on 2-year colleges undergoing external pressures and facing critical events (Miles & Huberman, 1994).

Foremost, the First Interview protocol, consisting of 10 guiding questions, attempted to put participants' overall experience in context by use of semi structured questioning (Bernard, 1994). A section entitled The Purpose of the First Interview, asked participants to explore lived experiences, talk about personal and family background, former leadership experiences, and attitudes about leadership until the time they became executive leaders in their current positions. This section asked that participants delve far back into their professional history, while considering the 60 minutes allocated for the interview.

Next, the Second Interview protocol consisted of 14 guiding questions, attempts to put participants' present experience in context in an estimated timeframe of 60–90 minutes. A section entitled The Purpose of the Second Interview stated what I would do during this second interview: concentrate on obtaining concrete details of the participant's present lived experience as a woman executive leader of a community college by asking her to reconstruct details of her current leadership experience and to share any critical learning moments in her leadership

practice for organizational change and systemic reform. In addition, each leader was asked to reflect on the meaning of her experiences in light of what she said about her life experiences in leadership positions overall during the First Interview, and given her current position as an executive leader.

Data-Collection Procedures

Identification and descriptions of data-collection procedures. The data-collection procedures for this study were directly connected to the research tradition, purpose, and main research question. The procedure for this study's data-collection process initially began with the use of purposeful sampling to identify female executive leaders who met specific criteria for interview sessions, which served as the main data-collection procedure. Next, I used purposeful networking sampling size and specifically a criterion-sampling strategy to identify sampling characteristics that would provide the most information-rich cases. I identified individuals with 10 or more years of experience in high leadership positions in public higher education over the age of 40 who held a graduate degree and currently led a large and ethnically diverse public, 2-year community college in southern California. Then, during the final stages, two sequenced, one-on-one semi structured interviews comprised the study's main form of data collection.

Description and timeline of data collection. After receiving an e-mail invitation, informed-consent form, and lay summary of my study, participants agreed through e-mail or telephone to participate in this study. I sent thank-you follow-up letters and e-mails to each executive with more details of the process of my study's main data collection, timeline, and informational procedures for the two one-on-one iterative interviews I conducted with them. Next, I scheduled the first of the two interviews through the gatekeeper, secretary, or chief of staff, for a 60-minute timeslot and ensured that the participant would not have any anticipated

meetings that could hinder the first interview time, as I deemed I would need a full hour. To accommodate the busy schedules of executive female leaders, Skype, an online video software application, was offered to conduct interviews.

The plan for the first interview was to first begin with a brief introduction of myself, as I expected to be meeting the leaders in person for the first time. Then, I asked the participant if I could audio-record our first interview and reiterated that all confidentiality would be protected, as described in the protocol and consent forms. Next, I asked her to read and sign the consent form prior to beginning the interview. I explained that I had devised semi structured questions to guide our dialogue, use 10 guiding questions to collect textual data in an attempt to put her overall experience in context. The first question was to ask the leader to tell me as much as possible about herself in light her leadership experiences up to that moment in time (Bernard, 1994).

This procedure was described and provided in advance to each participant in a section entitled The Purpose of the First Interview. I stated that I would ask the participant to explore lived experiences, talk about personal and family background, discuss former leadership experiences, and extrapolate on attitudes about leadership up until the time she became an executive leader in her current position, going as far back as possible within the 60 minutes allocated. The first interview was a narrative with each question building on the previous question to allow and give these female executive leaders a sense of my overall exploratory research approach to better understanding their overall lived experiences and inner perspectives before the second interview.

Consequently, in the second interview I used 14 guiding questions to collect data. These questions attempted to put participants' present experiences in context by asking them to tell me

as much as possible about themselves in light of their leadership experiences. Again, this procedure was described and provided to each participant in advance in a section entitled The Purpose of the Second Interview, which delineated the details of this second interview: a concentration on obtaining concrete details of participant's present lived experience as a female executive leader of a 2-year institution, asking her to reconstruct details of her current leadership experience and share any critical learning moments in her leadership practice for organizational change and systemic reform.

In the next step in this process of data collection, I asked each participant to reflect on the meaning of her experiences in light of what she said about her life before she became an executive leader and given what she had said about her work presently. The interview plan specified that within 60 to 90 minutes I would like to understand her overall leadership practice, where she sees herself and the field of leadership, and, in particular, her leadership style in relation to leading organizational change and reform efforts.

Participants in this study had very busy schedules, and I needed to be cognizant of their time to ensure I was able to get the most information-rich data within their time constraints and schedules. Therefore, I consciously condensed and applied Seidman's (2006) three-interview series, but modified it into two longer interviews. However, I maintained the structures and procedures described by Seidman "to allow participants to reconstruct and reflect upon their experience within the context of their lives, alterations to the three-interview structure." Because "there are no absolutes in the world of interviewing," the overall structure was maintained (Seidman, 2006, pp. 21–22).

Furthermore, reflection during the second interview was intended to provide useful, rich, and relevant data, as participants' recalled various times of crucial learning moments in their

leadership practice that did not hinder nor delay them until another instant in time. Theory-building analysis was beneficial because this study's research purpose was theoretically driven in the feminist framework using transformative-leadership theory, and shaped by conceptual questions that explored women's leadership styles, experiences, and significant learnable moments through guided reflective dialogue, in light of their respective holistic lived histories (Seidman, 2006).

Follow-up questions. Although the written questions generated knowledge, I anticipated there would be a need to ask some follow-up questions of participants after the interviews. Asking a participant to elaborate on her responses demonstrates that the researcher is interested in the person and her responses (Rossman & Rallis, 2003). Therefore, I ended each interview by informing participants that I might contact them for any follow-up questions after transcribing the audiotaped interview. Follow-up questions may have been necessary to increase my understanding and greater accuracy, and create a conversational dynamic that helped put the female executive leader participant at ease (Rossman & Rallis, 2003).

Data-Analysis Processes

Introduction and identification of data-analysis procedures. I analyzed data for this study in four stages using analytical techniques to support a data-analysis approach guided by the phenomenological-research tradition. Sokolowski (2000) defined this research inquiry as "the study of human experience and of the ways things present themselves to us in and through such experience" (p. 2). Thus, I used thematic analysis to identify patterns and themes of critical learning moments as phenomenon in leadership experiences. The four stages of analysis were iterative and included memoranda and reflective field logs, and preliminary hand coding of

transcripts for thematic analysis conducted in stages to identify themes and patterns after initial codes to create clustering and coding.

First, I conducted preliminary data analysis using concepts to develop initial codes identified from the literature review, followed by performing early data analysis of memoranda, reflective field logs, and notes I used to expand and develop new codes from initial codes. Next, my thematic data analysis described how data were clarified, collapsed, and expanded by applying codes across data files. I performed preliminary hand coding of transcripts for thematic analysis in stages to identify themes and patterns. Then, I clustered and coded transcripts of personal interviews with participants to further collapse thematic categories. Finally, I used thematic analysis to identify patterns and identified themes through clusters of codes or code families, which led to the development of thematic categories related to critical learning moments. During each stage, I described the timeline, goal, and outcome of the process of data analysis.

Description of stages in data analysis.

Stage 1: Preliminary data analysis. Stage 1 was the first of four major steps in the process of data analysis used to identify concepts to form early codes. Concepts were identified from a review of relevant thematic empirical literature. I searched and identified key phrases in gender, education, leadership reform, organizational change, and female leadership style themes to gain a coherent starting point for memoing during the interview process. I analyzed information gathered from the field during data collection with field memoranda, which served as the bridging tool to an overall *goal* to summarize issues, identify concepts, develop codes, and formulate additional questions (Grbich, 2007). The *outcome* of this initial preliminary phase of data analysis was decontextualization (Tesch, as cited in Coffey and Atkinson, 1999, p. 30). The

overall *process* for this stage was to formulate concepts from (a) theoretical literature, (b) empirical literature, and (c) research questions by using concepts I identified, with important quotations and outstanding issues from data collection to investigate further. I continued to be open to the possibility of modifying my data-collection instruments to reflect changes and continue data-collection activities at the end of this phase.

Stage 2: Early data analysis. The second stage of data analysis involved processing transcribed data of participants' sequenced, personal interviews, memoranda, or notes I gathered from the field. The interviews of each participant were organized using the first and second interview-protocol guides. Participants' tape-recorded interviews were backed up and password protected in two software storage devices and were then sent to a transcriptionist service identified by my dissertation chair. The *goal* of this stage of data analysis was to examine field notes and transcription data with codes in mind from earlier data identified in Step 1. The *outcome* of this stage involved expanding the data from initial coding to develop new codes. In this *process*, I use additional concepts identified in Stage 1 and made use of important quotations and outstanding issues from preliminary data to engage further investigation. In addition, I used data simplification or reduction techniques (Coffey & Atkinson, 1999, p. 28). Furthermore, I implemented measures to securely store and retrieve data from password-protected computer files. Last, I modified data-collection instruments to reflect changes and continue data-collection activities.

Stage 3: Thematic data analysis. The third stage of data analysis involved a deeper thematic analysis. As to *timeline*, Stage 3 took place after data were collected and preliminary data analysis was completed. The overall *goal* was to segment, categorize (or code), and link data to identify emerging themes (Grbich, 2007). The *outcome*, then, was recontextualized using

concepts I developed to code segments of data into meaningful “bits” or “chunks” and apply and further elaborate concepts (Tesch as cited in Coffey and Atkinson, 1999). Because this was a phenomenological study, I analyzed “data for significant statements grouped into ‘meaning units,’ with the goal of producing an exhaustive description” (Bloomberg & Volpe, 2012, p. 175) of critical learning moments in the phenomenon by developing themes and meanings. In the *process* of coding, linking codes and categorizing codes that have common and shared characteristics, I described emerging patterns. I also clarified codes, and collapsed and expanded codes to apply codes across data files (Miles & Huberman, 1994). Furthermore, I used analytical memoranda and memoing from codes, which included my reflections and commentaries on segmented, coded data, to provide additional analysis with the use of more coding, linking, and mapping (Coffey & Atkinson, 1999). Theory-building analysis, therefore, was beneficial because this study’s research purpose was theoretically driven by transformative leadership theory in the feminist framework and shaped by conceptual questions that explored women leaders’ significant learnable moments through a guided reflective dialogue, colored by each subject’s history as perceived holistically (Seidman, 2006).

Stage 4: Interpretation of data analysis. In the fourth and final stage of data analysis, I interpreted data for concepts, codes, and networks developed. Because this was the last stage of analysis, the *goal* was to further describe patterns and draw conclusions about themes emerging from data analysis (Grbich, 2007). The overall *outcome* of this stage was transformation: transcendence of “factual” data and how to integrate them (Wolcott as cited in Coffey & Atkinson, 1999, p. 46). By using the *process* of interrogation, I moved from coded data to meaningful data and explored how codes (categories) related to the original data and theoretical ideas (Delamont as cited in Coffey & Atkinson, 1999, p. 46). Last, I linked data by locating

relevant data segments and formed clusters or networks of information to develop emerging themes. Further, I formulated conclusions by retrieving coded data and grouping coded sets into combinations to explore relationships. Dey (as cited in Coffey & Atkinson, 1999, p. 46) suggested playing with the data by splitting or splicing coded data segments into subcategories and linking them back together to “make pathways through the data.” The study’s results were written with and supported by the use of graphic display of data to report overall patterns or trends. The data were displayed and organized by selected, segmented data from networks and were displayed in a matrix to aid in inspecting links, verifying themes, and drawing conclusions (Miles & Huberman, 1994).

Roles of the Researcher

As a full-time student in a doctoral program in educational leadership at a state university, busy mother of two young children, education professional, certified administrator, and teacher in the field of secondary and higher education, I bring various researcher roles and assumptions to this study. My previous roles include experience in the fields of advocacy for women and girls and experience in making policy recommendations to the executive and legislative branches of government. I discuss these various roles in this section by individually addressing each; then explain how I mitigated and accounted for beliefs, assumptions, or bias in detail.

The origin of the study relates to my interest in assisting with efforts to advance women’s and girls’ education by using best practices in the field of educational leadership. My previous leadership and advocacy work was dedicated to advance gender equality, access to education, and women’s rights globally. My future aspirations include working with the United Nations and starting an international social-justice organization aimed at enhancing the education of women

and girls in developing and LDCs. By using leadership best practices, networking, and supporting institutions of higher education and organizations through partnership and collaborative program building, I plan to conduct additional research and develop projects to locate, engage, and support emerging female leaders in LDCs to further assist their efforts toward the advancement of education of women and girls.

My role in planning and conducting this study was to be aware of relevant researcher assumptions, beliefs, and biases by keeping these subjectivities in check during the planning and conducting of this research study (Peshkin, 1998). As the researcher, I first discovered my assumptions, beliefs, and biases during my pilot study when two leaders referred to themselves as “transformative” and “change agents.” I believe that real change agents and reform-minded leaders are hard to come by. I became aware of this bias toward these claims and learned to limit my bias and strive not to judge participants’ characters and humilities because bias may skew my view of the study’s participants. This point is critical because this study’s research questions directly relate to educational leaders’ perceptions of their leadership roles and views of change-management processes in their institutions. Thus, I continually monitored any cynicism in response to leaders’ perceptions and claims of their contributions to educational and leadership fields of study by being mindful and reflecting on the situation and by assessing and accounting for my own feelings. According to Peshkin (1988), sound qualitative research needs to have an enhanced awareness that should result from a formal, systematic monitoring of the self, because “untamed subjectivity mutes the emic voice” (p. 21).

As a critical researcher, it was imperative to position myself in the text, to be reflective and self-aware of my roles as an advocate for change, and to be self-conscious and transparent in the written research report by continually identifying my biases; I also needed to distinguish my

textual representations (Creswell, 2012). Upon further reflection on my researcher roles and possible effects on data collection and analysis was the realization and knowledge of the importance of explaining and explicitly stating my initial biases, values, and beliefs during data collection; then, monitoring my subjectivity in the process of research and practice in the field (Glesne, 2011). These are especially significant in that I am an outsider meeting and conducting interviews with college executive leaders in high levels at their institutions (Bogdan & Biklen, 2007).

My experience prior to entering the field of education, as an advocate for women's rights and education in underserved regions and LDCs needed to be accounted for and reigned in, as the female-advocate role came into play and may have tainted the research process. In addition, I also have over 12 years of experience in my teacher-faculty and administrative roles in various positions in the field of education, including teacher trainer, mentor, and lead department chair. Furthermore, as a full-time doctoral student in an educational-leadership program, I have advanced knowledge in pedagogy, and conceptual and theoretical best practices in the specific area of community college expertise. Therefore, if I observed or heard certain behaviors or statements regarding faculty and pedagogy, I had to rely on self-awareness of these roles to "avoid the trap of perceiving just that which my own untamed sentiments have sought out and served up as data" (Peshkin, 1998, p. 20).

According to Rossman and Rallis (2003), if an ethical or political issue arises, the researcher should acknowledge the existence of a researcher's multiple roles by providing full disclosure, considered important in quality research studies. I needed to be especially aware of any feelings and experiences with previous administrators I may have had who may have provoked my beliefs of how an effective administrator should manage and lead by best practices

and knowledge gained. In having a significant educational and professional background, my learning curve, particularly during the educational-leadership doctoral program, allows for reflective practice to better serve the researcher role. Furthermore, as a full-time doctoral student in the field of educational leadership at a California 4-year public institution that prepares leaders in the field of higher education leadership, the practical and academic doctoral-student role needed to be taken into account.

In conducting the pilot interview and observations, I felt the warm spots referenced by Peshkin (1988) when some of the leadership experiences expressed and observed in action elicited excitement upon discovery. I kept a journal entitled “To Monitor Myself” and documented “feelings and reactions” such as hot and cool spots in mindful awareness, beginning with the pilot study and throughout the duration of this study, thereby learning early on the importance of this valuable tool (p. 18). Second, tools such as interview protocols (Seidman, 2006) and triangulation (Denzin, 1978) were key in accounting for these preconceptions and biases, ensuring they did not unjustly influence the results of this study. Third, I was alert to negativism by self-monitoring through the study and by acknowledging these preconceptions and biases by answering and documenting an iterative reflective-questions activity entitled “Reflexive Questions Activity” at various times during the study, such as during prestudy tasks, initial data sampling, data collection, and analysis. In so doing, I enhanced the credibility of this research study, disclosing, tracking, and accounting for any assumptions, beliefs, and biases (Walcott, 1990). Last, because data collection comprises a large part of the activities I performed, considerations were made to first address these multiple roles: my role as a female educational leader, a doctoral student in an educational-leadership program, and a teacher, in addition to any biases I addressed earlier.

Chapter Four: Results

Introduction

I conducted data analysis for this study in multiple, iterative stages, and used an analytical approach guided by the phenomenological research tradition. This chapter presents three discreet categories of results—profiles, profile themes, and critical learning moment (CLM) themes. First, I profile the women executive leaders who participated in this study: an interim chancellor of a large community college district, a superintendent-president, a president, and a vice president. I developed participant profiles based on family background, education, and career. After creating profiles of each participant, I discuss three major leadership-profile themes: (a) shared influences and support structures; (b) internal and external motivation, optimism, and willingness to volunteer beyond their call of duty; and (c) gender issues and leadership-style differences experienced in previous leadership positions. Mechanically, I followed four stages during the data-analysis process: profiling, coding, clustering/categorizing, and thematizing.

Next, I analyzed data to develop initial and expanded codes identified from my literature review, memoranda, reflective field logs, and notes. I used thematic analysis to identify patterns through clusters of codes, then developed thematic categories related to CLM of transformative leadership behaviors and innovative leadership practices, as the phenomena of interest. These six identified themes are: (a) realization and reconciliation moments: challenges of leadership in struggles, disappointments, and compromises; (b) impactful moments: leadership is a lifestyle, a commitment and a calling in shaping daily lives of constituents; (c) empowerment moments: stories reinforcing self-worth and belief; (d) capacity-building moments: mentoring and paying it forward, the need for future leadership development of women in community colleges;

- (e) relational moments: egalitarian leadership behavioral styles of change agents; and
- (f) pioneering moments: emergent, interactive organizational processes in systemic reform.

Finally, I summarize results and preview findings and recommendations for future research and practice, presented in the next chapter.

Participant-Profiles and Leadership-Profile Themes

Rationale. Crafting profiles of “participant’s experience is an effective way of sharing interview data and opening up one’s interview material to analysis and interpretation” (Seidman, 2006, p. 119). Because my in-depth interviews had a beginning, middle, and end, I could shape them into a profile, a narrative in participants’ words, as the research product. This method is most consistent with the process of in-depth interviewing (Seidman, 2006).

[We] present the participant in context, to clarify his or her intentions, and to convey a sense of process in time, all central components of qualitative analysis. ... We interview in order to come to know the experience of the participants through their stories. (p. 120)

Therefore, profiling displays coherence in the constitutive event of a participant’s experience, shares exactly what the participant has expressed, and links the individual’s experience to the social and organizational context in which she operates (Seidman, 2006, p. 120).

Process: Steps in crafting participant profiles and leadership-pathway themes. After completing interviews and transcribing interviews, I studied transcripts of each participant in the order interviewed. I worked to minimize imposing on the generative process of the interviews what I thought I learned from other participants (Seidman, 2006). Because in-depth interviewing generated a large amount of text, I began reducing the data inductively “with an open attitude, seeking what emerges as important and of interest from the text” (Seidman, 2006, p. 117).

Using pseudonyms, I formed the profiles in the first person, as if participants were speaking directly to the reader, sharing experiences in exactly the way each leader expressed them during the first interview (Seidman, 2006). I marked items of interest in the text for data reduction: I selected all passages I had marked as important and consolidated them into a single transcript. Next, I read the new version, retaining passages that were most compelling (Seidman, 2006). By classifying transcript excerpts of all participants from the first interview, I noted the commonalities I found to be the most cohesive in connecting participants' backgrounds.

Next, I labeled, collapsed, and filed excerpts appropriately, defining categories thematically (Bloomberg & Volpe, 2012; Dey, 1993; Grbich, 2013; Seidman, 2006). Three leadership pathways emerged from profile development, thematically organized by participants' experiences, presented in their own words and organized in categories. Three profiled leadership pathways emerged and guided the development of each participant profile: (a) the influences of familial upbringing and background, (b) educational path, and (c) career/professional path.

Profile 1: Sara Schenectady (President)

I always imagined that I would go to college. ... The script that I got as a kid from parents was "you're the oldest. You have to be responsible. You have to set a good example." Well, that really resonates with me even today. ... [I assumed] I would go to college and I would do something with my life. ... I think the scouting, and athletics, and the family encouragement, and the birth position ... all really reinforced that idea of good, responsible leadership.

I had wanted to go into teaching, but there were not a lot of teaching jobs available. So I decided to stay in school and go for a master's degree. ... shortly after becoming a full-time [community college] faculty member, I got involved in the faculty senate and other faculty-leadership opportunities here at the college. I became very, very interested in the whole topic of

higher education now that I was ... evening Department Chair for the evening faculty in the department, and then the full Department Chair, and then a VP of the Academic Senate, and also Senate President at some point.

I found that all of that dynamic of running the institution, working with my colleagues, seeing how we were doing to help students succeed—that actually became much more interesting to me even than my discipline of teaching: ... what makes an institution run, and all the different moving pieces. ... Doing my PhD at [University of California], I really started to realize that I was ready to move into administration.

It was probably better to make the change from faculty to administration by moving to a different college. ... I was the acting VP of Academic Affairs. So one of the things that happens when you're in an acting capacity... is you're just literally filling behind someone—[my boss] returned, [pushing] me back to my [vocational education] dean. Well, once I had the taste of what it was like to be a vice president... I realized it was time for me to seek a vice president or comparable position. As a vice president I got to influence the direction that the institution was going to take, and working with the other VP's and the president—being a real mover of the institution. So it was my being able to coordinate at a higher level is what I got hooked on, basically. And... I think a logical progression in a leadership role is you keep seeking the next higher level of leadership because you see how it all fits together at each level, and then you're ready to branch out to the next level or the broader picture. ... So once I had that experience for a year, I knew myself...that I wouldn't be satisfied with just going back to the narrower role of dean.

And so I wasn't sure where to go next, but I just started doing a job search. ... I actually applied for a number of positions on the east coast and was selected—as part of the State

University of New York system—which is a little different than the California system but ... the themes and the conditions of community colleges are amazingly similar on the big level. It was a good fit and I was prepared to stay there for quite a while, but as it turned out my husband had second thoughts about becoming an East Coast resident again on a long-term basis. So after three years there I was job hunting again. And we just decided that no, we would stay more in southern California and low and behold, VP of Academic Affairs at Basin College opened up. And I competed for that position, and others as well, but I got the one for Basin.

I developed another interest in collective bargaining, and became the in-house expert on all of our labor contracts. I, in essence, volunteered to serve on the negotiating committee for the faculty. I was working heavily on faculty wages, hours, and working-condition issues. ... I really enjoyed it. And at the same I was also contemplating whether or not I wanted to become a college president. So as it turned out, I wasn't really quite ready or others didn't think I was ready to be a college president. I did get some interviews, but it just wasn't quite happening. And the move, certainly, from dean to vice president, and then also from vice president to president is very much an issue of timing and match. And I certainly see this now— although it's a little more painful when you don't get what you want, right? So my realization that I wasn't going to make it to the president's level at that moment said to me well, I need to broaden my area of expertise.

I realized it was probably time for me to take another assessment of my interests and how I can make a contribution, and... The president, who I had worked with here when I was VP— she was ready to retire. ... I had a history with this institution and I think it's all pretty positive, so why not [apply]? ... I was selected as the permanent president, and the field is competitive. And so I think I really realized that I needed something that distinguished me ... needed... something that would be of value to the institution that I could bring with me that would really

say, wow, if we get her we get this, too. I think that that's really important for people to understand especially when you're seeking promotional opportunities.... So I think that as I have honed my abilities as a leader with my abilities in negotiation.

I'm able to move a group and I think that that comes from being a female as much as anything else. ... People talk with me, they share things with me. ... And I think that it's a style that institutions either take to or they don't. ... Your reputation does come with you, but you don't get it given to you on day one. You have to really earn it. And I think men may have a little of that risk when if they don't deliver on what they're coming in the door with then they're maybe—lose favor with whoever they're trying to appeal to.

And if you had asked me when I was marching in my high school graduation would I be sitting here today as a college president? I would've said no way. ... I also want to continually stretch my own world—my own aspirations even at this stage in my career because that ... enables me to make a better and a bigger contribution.

Profile 2: Anne Reina (Vice President)

I always knew that I wanted to get into education. And so early on when I was in junior high/high school I worked with autistic kids. ... Also, as an undergraduate I volunteered to be part of tutoring program for students in ... a juvenile jail. So I always liked that one-on-one interaction with students at risk or students who don't have much of an opportunity elsewhere. ... My family has always been very supportive as well. And I think I was introduced to college at a very early age. ... There was never a question that I was going to go to college. ... So the only question was whether or not I would go to graduate school even though that was expected in my family as well. I think I always had education as being a part of my worldview. ... Everybody should have an education.

[I] graduated with a master's degree in anthropology and decided not to go for a doctorate degree. ... It took about a year before somebody was nice enough to go ahead and hire me. So I ended up ... teaching anywhere between—I would say a minimum of eight—and there was one point I was teaching up to 14 classes—that was a tough semester—as a freeway flier. Don't get health benefits, but at least you're able to work ... I was able to finally get a full-time position.

I was in a department that was all ... older men. And some of them were a little bit jaded, ready to be retired. ... I really needed to get out of the department. So I tried to be involved in other aspects of the campus, really, just to show that I can be part of and do things that are actually building for a better future for the campus. ... [I] was on the Curriculum Committee; it had a longstanding curriculum chair, who was also nearing retirement and he was impressed with me because I decided to update course outlines that hadn't been updated for many years. ... When he was looking to retire he said, well, why don't you become a curriculum chair? And I was probably about 2 years into my full-time position. It's a 4-year tenure-track process.

[I] became the Academic Senate representative and I got more involved and I ended up running for the Vice President of the Academic Senate and got that 3 years, I think—maybe 4—while I was Curriculum Chair. It was two different positions. [I] did a lot of good things in the Academic Senate. One of the areas that I took over was the Educational Planning Committee that was a rather defunct committee and I restructured it, and I ... organized it in such a way that it was really workable. And we put together an educational master plan.

And during that time period I had a very good relationship with the Senate President. He was ... making plans to go the district clearly he had it in his mind that I would be taking his position. ... primarily because nobody else wanted the position. ... I was also approached by a

board member of our district who I was friendly with ... when I was part-time, and she always liked me. ... I never really thought about it until she actually mentioned it. I did think—during the time that I was Curriculum Chair—that I took on a lot of pseudo administrative responsibilities. ... I kind of wanted things to be done right, and administrators are busy.

Board members started promoting and supporting a new administrative leadership program at the district level. I was in the pilot and that was a decent program because a lot of it was bringing in people like chancellors, presidents, vice presidents from not only the district, but all over the place giving their perspective and their ideas to the real-life issues that I wasn't as exposed to in my faculty leadership role. And while I was listening to the experiences I kept saying I can do that, I can do that! [Since] one of the other things about being in my leadership position is I spent a lot of time in the Academic Affairs Office ... I definitely knew I wanted to get into Academic Affairs.

I think I was fortunate the fact that I was female was not really an issue in terms of the decisions that I made or the acceptance that I received. ... Sometimes you come up against issues of not being in the clique—the boys and stuff like that and you just work that out. ... I felt that I had to use my charm as a woman—and when I say charm I mean not sexual charm but charm in terms of just being pleasant.

One of the nice things about community colleges, I have found, is that most people have the same end interest. They want to work with students—Yeah, I mean, sure, shared governance, but really that you just want to do right by the students. ... That shared perspective that you have with the faculty and the administration where you feel like you're doing the right work, if you will, really brings people together quite well.

Profile 3: Darlene Huntersail (Superintendent-President)

When I was an undergraduate ... I wanted to be an elementary school teacher like my grandmother. ... “Figure it out. You’re in charge of your own destiny.” I was lucky that I was raised in a hardworking, “hard work pays off,” “no whining” environment. We were always moving ... so I was used to constant change. I think growing up in that environment I was pretty free to craft my own case, my own path.

I started teaching at the community college level 2 days after I graduated with a bachelor’s degree from college. I taught junior high school for about 6 years. I started a master’s degree at Cal State at the same time that I started teaching ... and...[got a] lifetime Community College sociology teaching certificate out of it. ... and...a double master’s in psychology and counseling. ... Shortly after that, they hired me—in fact, the next month—to teach graduate school...which I did for about 8 years part-time, while teaching junior high. [Then], I applied for a counseling job at Hill College, but they really wanted me to... start the Women’s. I took a leave from my junior high school position and went over. I said, “I’m not going back to the junior high school.” I loved the kids, but I hated the structure of K–12 education. ... And I said, “So what can I do to stay here?” [The president] said, “Well, you can write a grant.” ... I had no clue what a grant was. He sent me over to our researcher ... and we wrote a grant with Cal State Northridge for a project called ... Vocation Education Equity Project ... designed to put women into nontraditional careers. We got the grant. We got several grants, actually. So I stayed on.

Later, the superintendent president’s job in Citrus County became open so I applied, and I got notified that I had an interview. ... I got as much information as I could on the area, made a copy of their most recent accreditations report and got their budget. So I came in, did a nice interview, [but] I offended the acting president at the time, who was the CIO. ... At the time, we

didn't have Affirmative Action rules in California. There was not a clear delineation of how to not give anybody an unfair advantage. ... I knew ... he was going to influence that committee to not [hire] me.

I think most community college presidents are from the instructional area. I'm in student services and I've got to get to instruction. ... You can ... transfer into the psych department, be a psychology teacher for about 4 years." I said, "Okay. I think I'm going to apply for some deans of student services and then maybe if I can get one, I can finagle my way into instruction." ... [I got] interviews at all those places. But right at that time, Wing River College opened up, which was very rural. I turned down a final interview three times. ... I said, "So I can only commit to 2 years, and I don't think you need somebody only for 2 years." And he said, "We need this place to change. We need it to grow up. We need it to think bigger. You can bring that perspective. Whatever you can do in 2 years, we'll be just happy as a clam." I said "I want to be a dean. I want the CIO position on a big college pay structure." They said, "Fine." I said, "And I want \$50,000 for incentive money." They gave it to me. I went, I had tons of experiences there; funny, life-changing experiences. ... I got to gain about 15 years of experience in 2 years. And even better, I got to see the big picture. ... They opened up the presidency here. I applied for the job and I was selected.

I never considered gender was going to be a barrier. ... I just thought I had a right to be there. ... You had to deal with male administrators that would make passes at you. I had no problem saying, "What are you doing?" I didn't get flustered. I said, "Joe, I know you. I've met your wife." And I'd say it in a loud enough voice that they knew they would never, ever, ever do that again. I would tell them if it was inappropriate and sexist.

When I was a dean [I] realized that 20% of the people are probably going to get excited about your idea just because they like you or they know you or they think there's something in it for them; 20% are probably never going to like it, even if they realize it's good. Your real role is to focus on the 60% in the middle who are uninformed, uneducated, and unconnected. The fun part of it is developing strategies to get to that 60% and then watch them get on board. I think people's fear of the unknown and lack of self-confidence is the largest inhibitor to creativity and change. ... The key is you've got to put your mind to it and then you've got to put your whole self into getting it accomplished.

Profile 4: Selma Flores (Interim Chancellor)

I was fortunate to grow up in a small town in south Texas where a majority of my teachers were of Mexican descent, were women, married with families. So I had a very positive role model in that regard; that you could be a woman, you could be Latino, you could go to college and have a career, like in school teaching. To be a K–12 teacher, that's basically what I thought I was going to do because I had that very positive role model.

My graduate degree was in social psychology. It was actually in graduate school and I enrolled at the university hundreds of miles away from home, but I had a husband and child. ... I went into my advisor and said, "I think that there's been a mistake. I actually enrolled for a master's degree program and all these people are enrolled in a PhD program." And he kind of chuckled and says ... "Well, look at it this way: if you stay here and do 2 more years of work—coursework, you'll be able to work on a Doctorate." ... My husband and I ... we're Mexican Americans and we were in north Texas and in totally foreign land.

It was kind of like a revelation for me that there was something in me that was actually—that I could be more than a school teacher or housewife or whatever. ... When I look at my own

upbringing I ... didn't recognize that there were people out there that didn't have the same opportunities that I had. ... I grew up in a pretty male-dominated kind of environment and then I had a very traditional Mexican American upbringing, so to think that I could excel ... I really did need others to believe in me before I believed in myself.

I came to work at a community college when I was working on my dissertation and had just had a child, so I needed some income. And I ... saw that some of the students struggled with basic skills, English. And I didn't realize that there were people that were totally illiterate in Spanish and in English. And so this lady brings me a note and it's from her supervisor at the plant thanking me for teaching her some basic language skills because for the first time ever they were able to communicate. And I just remember—I mean, I'm still choking up. I just remember tearing up when I read that because ... I was so naïve, I didn't realize that.

So what started off as this other position turned into an opportunity to work for the college on a full-time basis on general operating funds. And really it took off from ... helping and encouraging people and nurturing people and their success. And so through that process—I think I also had a very strong work ethic, so whatever was needed to do the job, I did it, but I also did it like 110, 120%. ... I always tried to do not just [do] a good job but the best job possible and that eventually came to the attention of the college president.

In about 5 or 6 years I became assistant to the president and in that capacity, I did not have authority, but I believed in the president's vision for the college and was very geared to support him in his efforts, so I learned to use my influence and my communication skills to get other folks to help with whatever the project was that we were working on. ... I recognize that he made it a point to assign me highly visible positions ... and he liked that I excelled with very little direction. ... Eventually the president said to me ... "You need more experience, you need

to work at another institution, and you need to do.” So I ... went to work for a new president. I really began, again, using my influence to work with the faculty and staff ensure that we ... revamped the entire planning office.

In seeking progressively more responsible roles, leadership was part and parcel of that increased responsibility. ... I was wanting to move up the ladder and I saw the impact that you can have [on decisions] as you move away from the classroom to administrative positions ... but it wasn't necessarily a conscious decision in terms of “I want to be a leader” kind of thing. I had to develop rapport with people. I can tell you that the first time out everything we proposed got shot to pieces. So we revamped everything and started all over again with a much more broadly participatory process. Eventually, I became president at that institution and ... and I wish I could tell you that it was hugely success; it wasn't. My term there ended with the board not extending my contract.

And I came to LA as a college president. ... The board was very well aware of the issues with regards to my employment. I was described as the hired gun; that I came in to clean up and that I was going to fire people and—well, first of all I need time to learn about the dynamics of the college and everything. And so it took me to build the stability internally to build the trust and respect that would lay the foundation for change. I was at Vision College for 5 and a half years and at the district office now for 7 and a half years. July began my tenure as the interim chancellor, but every step of the way I think that it's been hard work and a willingness to go the extra mile.

Participant Profile Themes: Leadership in Women's Lives

Theme 1: Support structures: Influences that shaped early leadership development.

Although participants came from diverse backgrounds, they shared having strong influences and

supportive structures that paved the way to leadership roles: (a) supportive familial upbringing in an environment where education was valued, with all participants' strong orientation toward and beginning roots in the teaching profession; (b) having supervising male mentors in the workplace and female role models during their trajectory of their career paths; and, (c) encouraging husbands with a majority electing to not have children. These collective supportive structures and influences inevitably helped with early career choices and leadership development.

Supportive familial upbringing with educational roots and teaching ambitions.

Participants had supportive familial upbringings in which education was part of their household environment from early childhood to graduate years. On this point, Interim Chancellor Selma Flores said,

When I look at my own upbringing I think well maybe I took it for granted that members in my family or siblings had been educated and ... I didn't recognize that there were people out that didn't have the same opportunities that I had.

Similarly, Vice President Anne Reina expressed early supportive influences toward education:

I always liked teaching. ... My family has always been very supportive. ... I think I always had education as being a part of my worldview, and that probably ... impacted my decisions ... to help people ... because everybody should have an education.

Thus, all participants aspired to be teachers and had some sort of teacher roots at the beginning of their career paths. Superintendent-President Darlene Huntersail said,

When I was an undergraduate, I wanted to be a teacher ... like my grandmother ... I was lucky that I was raised in a hardworking, "hard work pays off" ... environment ... I was pretty free to craft my own case, my own path.

All participants in this study sought to make a bigger contribution, to impact the lives of students, and to contribute to improving the field of education.

Male mentors and female role models. All participants had male mentors and female role models in their career paths leading to their executive positions. Mentors were typically men, their immediate superiors in their institutions, whereas role models were previous teachers, family members, colleagues, and other women presidents or executives they encountered during early career paths, conveyed here by President Sara Schenectady: “[He] had amazing expertise at collective marketing—was a mentor. . . . As far role models . . . all of them, I think, may not have thought of themselves as my role models but clearly they had that influence, all women.” Likewise, Interim Chancellor Selma Flores expressed, “My mentors have been male, but [women were my] role models. I think it was as I was growing up and going up the ranks that I learned from other women.” Consequently, mentors and role models were instrumental in modeling, teaching certain leadership skills, but were influential in challenging participants and influencing their career paths by encouraging them to seek higher positions and leadership roles.

Supportive husbands, no children. All participants seemed to have supportive husbands who encouraged their career paths, and all but one elected not to have children. President Sara Schenectady articulated the following:

I had the good fortune of meeting a man who agreed with me—who 44 years later is still married to me—my husband. . . . We got married when I was still finishing my bachelor’s. And I said, “Well, if we get married, I still want to go finish my college.” He says, “Well, why wouldn’t you?” I mean, so it was pretty amazing in those days because it was still hard for women who wanted to be professional, who didn’t necessarily want to start a family right away, or at all, because some of us wanted to focus on other things. . . .

Having supportive husbands who encouraged participants' educational and leadership development inevitably helped participants by not only having a caring and encouraging home environment, but also with subsequent short- and long-term career choices in relocating to different institutions or states to support their leadership advancement.

Theme 2: Internal and external motivation: Going beyond the call of duty with belief in the power to change the future. Although participants had diverse backgrounds and differing trajectories in leadership pathways, collectively they appeared to be optimistic and have a general positive predisposition, motivated to continually challenge themselves professionally by seeking higher positions of leadership and advancing career-growth opportunities. Because internal motivation played a large part in participants' sense of purpose and personal belief in their ability to contribute and impact the field of education and the leadership profession, they exhibited strong willingness to volunteer and go beyond their daily call of duty.

Having a positive outlook and confidence in themselves served participants well when met with external challenges and times of crisis, because they believed they had power to change the future. Last, participants shared a strategic decision-making matrix in seeking higher level positions, based not only on their internal drive and motivation, but also on continual development of their skill sets and willingness to seek other opportunities, even if unappealing at first. Following, participants offer thoughts on internal and external motivation and willingness to volunteer and perform extra duties in their leadership and administrative capacities.

Internal and external motivation. Internally, participants appeared to share an optimistic outlook, and were motivated to continually challenge themselves, as conveyed by President Sara Schenectady: "I'm still challenging myself and I'm still taking on challenges ... and I don't want to limit myself." All participants strove to take charge of their destiny by having a positive

internal monologue when taking on new challenges. Vice President Anne Reina listened to college presidents speak when she was a faculty member and beginning to contemplate an administrative role: “I started thinking about . . . the skills. And while I was listening to the experiences [of leaders] I kept saying to myself I can do that, I can do that!” In the face of major obstacles, bureaucracy, and funding issues for her college’s construction project, President Sara Schenectady articulated perseverance this way: “Being the, kind of person who is incredibly tenacious—I don’t give up easily.” As a result of such internal convictions, perseverance and a general positive outlook were beneficial to leaders, especially in times of crisis, such as the severe economic downturn when colleges faced severe budget cuts and external pressures. The women appeared to exhibit qualities of persistence and optimism, coupled with an affirmative, activist outlook to convey a belief that there is power to change the future.

The appeal of a sense of purpose and being involved in a larger picture to contribute to improvements and change in their leadership practice, position, or institutions were external motivations all participants shared: President Sara Schenectady articulated, “I also want to continually stretch my own world—my own aspirations even at this stage in my career because that makes me better, and that also enables me to make a better and a bigger contribution.” Once participants had tasted a higher leadership role in an interim position, or exposure to an upper-level position, future decisions became strategic in seeking higher level positions based on internal motivation, knowing their own skills and desires, coupled with timing and a willingness to seek out other opportunities. Superintendent-President Darlene Huntersail shared, “I realized that if I could compete in that arena . . . I want to be a president. . . . I was very strategic . . . I went somewhere to give me the experience that I could get in a condensed fashion.” After competing for and getting a final interview for a higher executive position, Darlene’s positive internal

monologue and general orientation ultimately influenced her internal and external motivation in making strategic decisions in her career trajectory. All participants shared an optimistic outlook, motivation to continually challenge themselves in their quest for higher positions of leadership during their midcareer pathways.

Willingness to volunteer beyond the call of duty. Another commonality among this study's participants was their willingness to volunteer to do more than was required in their leadership and administrative capacities. Vice President Anne Reina stated, "Oftentimes people referred to me as the committee queen because I [volunteered] and was involved in a lot of different committees. And I took a lot of leadership in those committees, too." Participants would volunteer, even without having the formative skills or knowledge required, because they were optimistic and willing to demonstrate they could get things done, were willing to learn, ask, and get involved in different initiatives: Interim Chancellor Selma Flores said, "I've always been positive and optimistic and ... I excelled with very little direction. ... I volunteered and learned to use my influence and my communication skills to help with whatever the project was that we were working on." Consequently, internal motivators of optimism, belief in themselves and their abilities, perseverance, and an overall sense of purpose, coupled with external motivators such as the appeal of being involved in a larger picture to contribute to improvements in their leadership positions, practice, or institutions were qualities all participants had in common.

Theme 3: Gender issues and leadership-style differences experienced in previous leadership positions. Participants experienced gender issues and perceived leadership-style differences in their leadership experiences in either seeking or leading as a woman. President Sara Schenectady expressed the importance of leadership style in gender differences, with women needing to prove themselves:

Men and women lead differently and institutions either take to or don't. ... Men have the advantage in that when they walk into the room with a title and with a position. ... People just buy it—the package ... but I see that women have a harder time pulling that off and that we, kind of, have to prove ourselves, and in all these different ways with all these different audiences on an ongoing basis... There is a difference—a gender difference, and—on the sending and receiving side of it.

Similarly, Interim Chancellor Selma Flores expressed the need to prove herself as a woman leader. In receiving feedback through the years, people tended to underestimate her at times because she came across as nurturing optimist in her leadership style:

So sometimes I'm perceived as being soft ... but I think that as I came up the rungs in my career there is a realization that I wouldn't have gotten here without the proven ability and without a proven track record, so I think that that's the difference ... constantly proving myself [as a woman leader]."

Gender issues in the workplace and during their leadership roles were significant for all participants as they expressed issues in seeking or leading as a woman in the community college setting. Vice President Anne conveyed that she used her "charm as a woman"—because she knew there would be times that allowed her to "make a little bit more headway" in getting the agenda she needed. Furthermore, before Superintendent-President Darlene Huntersail became a CEO, women middle-management leaders had to deal with male administrators who "would make passes ... and it just was another target towards whom to be assertive." Here, President Sara Schenectady expressed her experience with male members of the board of trustees:

But I think that stakeholders often—especially male stakeholders—don't accept women as readily on face value. I really think that. And so I do find—because I'm pretty active

in the community, now—after 5 years—that when I walk into those meetings people talk with me, they share things with me in a very different way than they did in my first year when they knew nothing about me, other than my being a woman.

Hence, all study participants shared experiences on gender issues and leadership-style differences in their past leadership roles in either seeking or leading as a woman.

Critical Learning-Moment (CLM) Themes: Transformative Leadership Behaviors and Innovative Leadership Practices

Rationale and process. In using analytical approaches guided by the phenomenological-research tradition, I performed the data analysis for participants' second and longer, 90-minute in-depth interviews, in the same fashion as for the first 60-minute in-depth interview—in multiple, iterative stages. In examining the leadership experiences and the leadership practices of women executive participants who led their campuses to systemic reform, I used thematic analysis to identify patterns and six themes of CLM of transformative-leadership behaviors and innovative-leadership practices as my phenomena of interest: (a) realization and reconciliation moments: challenges of leadership in struggles, disappointments, and compromises; (b) impactful moments: leadership is a lifestyle, a commitment and a calling in shaping daily lives of constituents; (c) empowerment moments: stories reinforcing self-worth and belief; (d) capacity-building moments: mentoring and paying it forward, the need for future leadership development of women in community colleges; (e) relational moments: egalitarian leadership behavioral styles of change agents; and (f) pioneering moments: emergent, interactive organizational processes in systemic reform. Explicitly, I used Bloomberg and Volpe's (2012) road map for the process of qualitative data analysis in developing a coding scheme, following the process of coding, clustering, and thematizing. For the process of thematic connections, I

began by searching for connecting threads and patterns among the excerpts in the categories, looking for connections between these various categories (Seidman, 2006).

CLM Theme 1. Realization and reconciliation moments: Challenges of leadership in struggles, disappointments, and compromises. In reflecting on the meaning of their experiences in light of their overall lived history, all participants seemed to understand the need for an insightful perspective, recognizing their disappointments and victories, compromising and picking battles in bureaucratic and institutional struggles when initiating and implementing a reform. President Sara Schenectady articulated her struggles and reconciliation moments:

I've had ... moments, where I realize and I recognize that if I'm going to do something or achieve something ... that has mostly to do with the politics. ... So much is politically driven and I still struggle with that. ... My own personal struggles come when any part of a bureaucratic organization is often fraught with individuals who like to usurp your authority and give you all of the responsibility. So I think the struggles that we face in a multicollege system are the expectation on the part of the board and the chancellor. I'm a very, very strong advocate for if you're going to give me the responsibility, you have to give me the authority ... Picking your battles is very important.

“Us–Them” politics: Struggles with district offices, board of trustees, and politically motivated decisions. Participants at the college level each expressed very strong feelings regarding their perceptions and struggles with the districts' lack of support of college leadership and politically driven environments, and questioned the commitment of members of the board of trustees. In contrast, participants at district levels and offices commented on college presidents' tendencies to compete, lack compliance, and lack an overall view of long-term planning at the college.

College-level executives continually expressed their biggest struggle was the lack of guidance and lack of suggestions offered to assist them in solving their campus budgetary problems. When they tried to solve their college's issues on their own, they felt their authority continually stymied. President Sara Schenectady expressed her perceptions and struggles:

We have very little flexibility. ... I have as strait-jacket administration. ... Everything is tightly bound, and you basically have room to twitch your shoulder or move your elbow a teeny bit, and that's about it. So my realm of success is really very, very confined, and very narrow and very restrictive, very controlled by people other than me ... there's a significant ... almost ...schizophrenic mentality, with holding the presidents responsible for everything, but ... telling them, no, they can't make those decisions. And that is really hard. It's really hard to be a leader in that environment. If it weren't for the fact that I absolutely am totally committed to what Basin College does and is about, and this community that we serve, I would have probably resigned a long time ago, because it's really an untenable situation. ... all of the political shenanigans.

They expressed how difficult it is to be a leader in a politically driven environment and felt a general lack of support from the district office for their leadership authority. President Sara Schenectady shared feelings on the lack of support from superiors at the district office: "I didn't feel like I had support from higher ups ... our organization ... it's not supportive of leadership. We're always criticized ... always asked to explain and justify everything ... rarely complimented." A general challenge for all participants seemed to be a sense of a barrier or divide, a sense of disconnection between their colleges and their districts. Vice President Anne Reina explained her feelings and perceptions on the difference of opinions and lack of support from her district about her campus' institutional change:

We have challenges with a disconnect ... between my campus and my district in terms of the kind of infrastructure that we need in order to be able to continue. ... We have identified solutions at the campus level ... but for various reasons it's just not something that has the support by the people that we need to get the support from at the district level. ... Now, the district [has] ... a difference of opinion. But part of our being able to come up with solutions and being able to make institutional change, it's directly related to certain support systems that need to be provided at the district level, which for various reasons is just not forthcoming.

Moreover, the college-level executive leader participants expressed that members of board of trustees used positions as stepping stones in their careers but lacked commitment to the educational mission of colleges. Adding to the challenges facing their leadership, participants described the intense political nature of their environments. President Sara Schenectady became quite emotional and cried when describing difficulties with the district, board of trustees, and general political nature of her environment in impeding her leadership:

Because of the political nature of this job ... it's much harder than I would have expected. And it's very much subject to the politics of the leaders at the district level. ... It's too bad because it doesn't help the educational process. ... It's really very debilitating and very distracting and very counterproductive. And it's just sad. And now we're in this transition again for another new chancellor—I've had four chancellors in 5 years. ... I think is harmful to the organization. ... This elected board here—there's always a campaign about to begin: Of course these are people who are in the early stages of their careers and they want to be upwardly mobile ... maybe there ought to be an age limit. You have to be over a certain age to be a trustee. ... It doesn't help us to have

somebody use us as a jumping-off platform, when we need their undivided attention to stay focused on what's important. Not tell us how to dole out the few little goodies that we get at the campuses. ... I'm sorry I'm getting a little jaded, but it's pretty frustrating.

However, from the perspective of the district and superintendent's office, participants expressed a general lack of togetherness; a sense of complacency, lack of a comprehensive perspective, and competitiveness from presidents about their colleges. Interim Chancellor Selma Flores explained this perspective well:

We're here to support the colleges. ... The obstacles are always people. ... When you're at a college, there's competition between your college and every other college. But there's also this "us-them" mentality because we're in the hub. ... We know what the rules are and they don't. ... And so we tend to think of the other as the bad guy...at the district level, or the district and the colleges, I think a shift of importance is ...trying to change the culture from us-them to all of us together.

On the college level, with regard to the lack of planning and leaders not meeting accreditation standards, *Superintendent*-President Darlene Huntersail expressed the challenges she has faced with college-level presidential leadership:

There's ... no planning processes ... no strategic planning. ... You can't lead unless you plan, always, at every level. ... For many, when there's a chance to really grow, they don't want to fail, so, they don't set the targets high enough to really gain ground because they don't want to say, "We didn't get there."

These reflective opportunities provided a deeper perspective of their struggles, and also of their own leadership experiences. Vice President Reina expressed these reflective moments:

Having those kinds of experiences where you begin to realize that being patient, and listening to people, and getting that information in has been helpful to building myself and saying that this is the right attitude to have.

Practicality, flexibility with a willingness to step back and change direction midstream during transformation. As individuals and as female executive leaders who have transformed 2-year public higher education institutions, participants expressed the need for practicality and flexibility in their leadership approaches, a learn-as-you-go method, but also a strong inclination and willingness to continually try new things, change direction, and take substantial risks.

Superintendent-President Darlene articulated these shared perceptions:

You pick up tidbits as you go along and ... add them to your repertoire. You have to have a vision ... you have to believe you can [transform] it and you have to be willing to work hard enough to do it. ... You can't be a good leader if you're not committed to constantly learning and changing. ... Figure out what's missing, see if you can tweak it.

Furthermore, participants expressed the need to be aware and able in knowing when to step back, reassess, listen, and pool more information when leading small- or large-scale organizational change in colleges and districts. VP Anne Reina explained:

As I continue to speak ... and listen to their concerns, and listen to their opinions ... it does somewhat surprise me day in and day out how much I learn and how important it is for me to again, take that step back ... absorb, and so forth. ... That's the only way I'm going to be able to have a handle on the entire situation.

Participants overwhelmingly expressed that they not only experienced obstacles and resistance to change when introducing, implementing, or instituting a reform initiative or process in their colleges and districts, but also realized the need to persevere and know when to change

their leadership approach, when met with roadblocks in leading organizational change.

Superintendent-President Darlene Huntersail struggled with resisters on her team: “The response that’s most difficult for me to deal with is ... disappointment in how other people behave [when resisting change]. And that’s the hardest thing for me to deal with still ... If you don’t have members of the team fully on board, you can’t get anything done.” In reflecting on the meaning of their experiences in light of their overall lived history, all participants realized moments of leadership and reconciliation as critical and meaningful in understanding leadership in their lives.

CLM Theme 2. Impactful moments: Leadership is a lifestyle, a commitment, and a calling in shaping daily lives of constituents. In reflecting on the meaning of their experiences in light of their overall lived history, all participants overwhelmingly expressed the impact they believed their leadership made on the daily lives of constituents. VP Anne Reina’s sentiments embody the group’s feelings on this point:

I feel like I’m doing a very impactful job for a lot of lives on the campus that I’m leading ... because I wanted to do good things for people ... wanted to do things for my community ... to have a feeling of satisfaction. ... I affect students ... I impact ... colleagues ... faculty and staff ... this is a good life to have, that they’re actually working at [in education].

Hence, this view of their leadership practice as impactful, presented a significant understanding for the women leaders. Leadership was viewed as an all-encompassing lifestyle, and a worthy, righteous cause, perceived as their higher calling and their lifetime’s commitment. President Sara Schenectady best described the group’s shared sentiments:

Leadership is a lifestyle. ... I want to make a difference ... something that is positive ... worthwhile. ... I’m dedicated. ... I believe in what I’m doing. ... It’s a worthy cause.

And I am truly committed to that ... I chose to be in public 2-year community colleges because of the mission. ... So that's been my life's commitment ... because I have a good sense of what it could be ... should be ... what it can be. And I'm influencing and making it happen.

Participants spoke of the impact their leadership made as the true test of their leadership ability, as an individual, as a leader, and as a female executive. Interim Chancellor Selma Flores's explains it this way:

I truly have wanted to be the best person, the best executive that I could be, that the work that I do has an impact on a number of people. ... It's all about the students ... So I think at the core of it is knowing ... being a true leader or true to myself; impacting lives ... being a genuine person.

In doing good work, participants expressed an unwavering dedication and commitment to making a difference in the lives of students and a wide range of constituents. Superintendent-President Darlene Huntersail best communicated the group's shared perception: "I do what I do to make a difference. ... I want to make a difference in opportunities and so that people can become their best selves, whatever that best self is." Their worldview and understanding of their leadership calling coupled with furthering the community college mission to service the underserved population of students, presented an even larger context of the impact of their leadership contribution. Here, VP Anne Reina expressed the group's understanding:

I wanted to really make the decision in my career path ... to really feel like I was doing good work—I'm not a religious woman, but God's work. ... Because in the end, I know that these are hard decisions that need to be made and I feel like I have the background

and experience and the ability of being able to make those hard decisions that are going to impact everybody's lives.

CLM Theme 3. Empowerment moments: Stories reinforcing self-worth and belief.

Participants described leadership in self-empowering moments while sharing and reflecting on their experiences. In articulating stories and personal experience, participants felt empowered in their leadership practice, as it reinforced their beliefs, commitments, and leadership abilities, despite the difficulties of the position. On articulating her stories, President Sara Schenectady shared, “s “I do believe that it [empower me and my leadership practice]; It strengthens my leadership ability. ... It's a feeling of commitment, in spite of how hard it is. Because these jobs are not easy, and you can't just take them on a whim.” But I certainly wouldn't have hesitated for a minute, even knowing what I know today.” Here Superintendent-President Darlene Huntersail described how she sees leadership informing the person she is:

The memories of the people and the moments that occurred around which I tell the stories are forever motivating. ... They have informed the person that I am ... I don't see my job as a job ... it's who I am and ... how I share or articulate my leadership experiences ... and giving good guidance ... that empowers me.

In sharing and reflecting on her experiences, VP Anne Reina surprised herself with the realization of the contribution of leadership to her confidence and overall self-worth:

I look at leadership as something that gives me ... self-worth ... my ability to feel like I'm doing something right for the world. ... because ... I'm able to have some good results that came out of those leadership experiences ... It allows me to feel more self-aware ... self-confident in terms of making other decisions that impact other areas of my life ... I guess looking back and reflecting I'm a little surprised by that. I do feel that it

empowers me and that ... by hearing my experiences, it empowers other people to know that they're not alone and that they can go on the same pathway.

Consequently, the female executives perceived leadership not only as impacting others, but empowering in their own lives as well. In reflecting on the meaning of their experiences, the women understood their overall leadership practice as more than a job or a position; as an all-encompassing lifestyle as individuals, as leaders, and as female executives of their colleges or districts. Interim Chancellor Selma Flores summed this concept:

I think that leadership is more than positional. It's not just that you're the college president or ... CEO. ... You've through the years been able to build a sense of trust and respect and a reputation for being open minded, fair, objective, or being one who can ... be a good problem solver, a good listener, maybe a good speaker. But I think it's that you've built up that bank, if you will, of characteristics, time, and that ... People become to think of you ... [as] committed; that you have certain passions or direction; and that you are going to be remain committed; ... that you are what people see; that the cover and the book are the same ... that's the most empowering.

Therefore, the knowledge of their abilities and leadership effectiveness, their commitment to constituents and to themselves, their persistence and hard work became evident as empowering and significant in all the participants' reflections during this study.

CLM Theme 4. Capacity-building moments: Mentoring and paying it forward, the need for future leadership development of women in community colleges. As mentioned earlier, all participants had male mentors and female role models in their career paths, leading to their executive positions, who were instrumental in influencing and challenging participants by modeling, teaching certain leadership skills, and encouraging them to seek higher positions and

leadership roles. Consequently, another shared pattern was participants' outlook on the need for future leadership development in community colleges and their own support of leaders, specifically women, by modeling, mentoring, and providing leadership guidance. Interim Chancellor Selma Flores's shared the importance of empowering mentees in making hard choices in their careers and leadership pathways by providing guidance, given her own personal experience in making such a difficult decision herself:

I try to be supportive of ... women leaders, [by] ... modeling. ... I mentor now. ... I have the experiences that I can ... relate to them when they have to make a choice between climbing the career ladder and staying home ... [like] when I made a decision. ... Everything was really ... stressful, I couldn't afford to quit my job, ... I couldn't afford to stay home, I had to take care of the parents, and I couldn't afford to be a full-time mom to my kids ... I think my life stories are such that I can relate what I've done ... why I've done things and how ... what my thought processes were so that I can help other young women as they're making similar choices.

Similar to Interim Chancellor Flores In mentoring and supporting the leadership development of upcoming women leaders, VP Reina saw the need for future leadership-capacity building in community colleges and shared her perception of the importance of providing leadership guidance for potential leaders:

I mentor several young women who are in their late 30s, early 40s and they're still climbing the career ladder ... to get them to think about [options], that there's a whole life ahead. ... Don't be so anxious about doing it all right now. ... I use examples from my own life. ... I try to give that encouragement to potential leaders. ... I think it is

important to mentor and support people ... [by] putting them into the direction that they want to go ... because I really appreciated that ... [when] I had that.

In addition to being supportive of other female leaders, participants looked for qualities of commitment, motivation, and confidence (but not necessarily formative skills) when assisting in leadership-capacity building. President Sara Schenectady articulated the importance of capacity building in the leadership development of new mentees:

“ ... It’s really ... absolutely something that I believe in. I would do the same thing for a male. But I’m especially receptive to females if they want to spend the time and energy and effort, talking with me, listening to me, asking me. ... It’s worth the time. ... I’m looking for strong leaders. Strong females are always good in my book.

As a result, participants seemed to believe that generally, effective leadership can be learned and taught to others by modeling and mentoring. Superintendent-President Darlene Huntersail expressed leadership development, mentorship, and support of women in her college:

I’ve mentored about 20 people through ... the administrator’s association mentor program [I helped establish]. ... Four of my vice presidents have become college presidents. ... When I came here, there were eight of us administrators ... [was] ... one other woman. ... This semester I’m mentoring four people I think most of our division deans ... three VP’s, our head of security ... [are] all women, so I think it’s about a belief and a loyalty to the profession that you mentor.

These reflective opportunities provided participants with a deeper perspective on the general ability to learn effective leadership skills and the humanizing role of the college presidency. Interim Chancellor Selma Flores’s explained,

College presidents, [realize] ... that they're human, they're bound to earth ... have the same weaknesses that anybody else has. ... So that was my "aha" moment. I don't know that you're born a leader, but I think that you can learn as you go. ... I think that there was a certain drive ... a certain attitude, but I think that you learn how to become a more effective leader.

With regard to their perceptions of the future of women in executive leadership in community colleges, participants were optimistic. Given how factors in her own life interacted to bring her to her present position, Interim Chancellor Flores affirmed,

The field is wide open. ... I think that women have a much better chance of becoming CEOs now than they did when I first became president 20 years ago. ... I walked into the room; they were either balding, or gray, or white haired men and one other woman in the room. There were 50 community college districts, with one other woman in the room and myself and the rest were all men. There's more of a balance, there are more women in the ranks. ... There isn't that glass ceiling anymore. ... In my district where we've seen real change.

Yet, for the future of leadership and training, future leaders in community colleges and districts, participants were not as hopeful, noting the lack of preparedness and training in educational institutions. Superintendent-President Darlene Huntersail articulated this outlook:

I don't see a lot of talent out there. ... I think that our educational institutions have done a pathetic job of training future leaders. ... I think that some of our state policy imperatives have unnecessarily deterred people from pursuing leadership positions that otherwise would've thrived. ... Boards of trustees have approved policies: ... AB 1725 ... took away the ability of administrators to lead, and that that has been a fundamental mistake in

the State of California in terms of inspiring people, recruiting people into leadership. I hear a lot of my CIOs, chief instructional officers, say there's no way they wanted to become a college president. I have my colleagues, other CEOs, say ... we don't know where the future leaders are going to come from, you know? So, I don't think we're well positioned. ... The average tenure of a CEO in California [is] 2.4 years and [you can't] say that you've attracted the best and the brightest.

The need for future leadership development in community college leadership and their own support of other women leaders by modeling, mentoring, and providing leadership guidance for future leaders was significant for participants in this study.

CLM Theme 5: Relational moments: Egalitarian leadership styles of change agents.

The participants' style of leadership behaviors and management practices was heavily relational; forging and maintaining relationships with all constituents was a priority for all four leaders. In her current role as Interim Chancellor for less than six months, Selma Flores explained the importance of relationships:

It's always been about building relationships and making sure that the door to communication is always open. ... I'm trying very hard to balance my current position and continue to work in a collaborative relationship with the board members, and also work to build on the relationships I already had with the college presidents and ensure that I'm building relationships among them as well, ... that they're also feeling empowered to have collaborative working relationships as opposed to competitiveness between one college or the other.

In articulating the importance of building and maintaining relation, Superintendent-President Darlene Huntersail explained,

Relationships take time ... require flexibility. I think that any good relationship means you have to leave your ego in the trash can when you enter the door or you'll never get at a really good solution. ... Relationships require honest communication: ... you build relationships by paying attention and noticing what's important to somebody. ...

Relationships require honesty; ... good communication that has to be complete.

As relational executives, participants exhibited leadership behaviors and techniques that were profoundly people oriented, as instructive and direct communicators, compassionate, and considerate. President Schenectady represented the group with her shared relational style of leadership, using instructive techniques with staff, faculty, and campus constituents, describing the personal satisfaction she gains in sharing her leadership knowledge with others:

I'm a good match for this institution. ... I have a lot of collaboration ... input ... group involvement ... transparency ... building consensus. ... Women tend to gravitate toward that style of leadership. That certainly is my style of leadership. ... I generally do not act in a way that would be top down—over authoritarian. ... I really do view teaching as a leadership: ... it's guiding, leading, nurturing ... moving—individually and collectively—through the learning process. ... In an administrative capacity ... I'm often playing the role of teacher because I'm trying to convey a point, help other people understand it, share the knowledge, and influence the direction.

In exhibiting democratic leadership styles, in having an open-door policy, and by cultivating open, collaborative responsibility through direct communication, participants delegated, negotiated, and appeared to be direct, fair, transparent, and persistent; yet, they all expressed their nurturing and caring qualities as relational leaders. Interim Chancellor Selma Flores explains how she balances her style in the following way:

I think that being persistent, being tough, being caring and nurturing at the same time has helped me. I will always ensure that that communication takes places ... I'm inclusive, fairly collaborative; I try to give everyone an opportunity to speak and to present their points of view. I do ... reach consensus in our decision-making. ... When I have to make the decision ... I try to reiterate once we leave this room, this is the decision that we all are married to.

Similarly, Superintendent-President Darlene Huntersail explained her relational, participatory style as a change agent:

[My] leadership style is Direct. Clear ... I'm flexible ... my style is a building style ... I like to see things transform to something better or more current or more inclusive ... to figure out how to help people feel comfortable and feel like their participation will make a big difference in the success of something. ... I am good at reading people ... seeing potential in people long before they can see it in themselves. I think my style is enabling for those who are willing to work.

They exhibited active-listening skills and the ability to continually gather and pool information. They accomplished this by taking the time to listen to all viewpoints prior to making decisions. Vice President Anne Reina represented the group in explaining her relational leadership style, exhibiting characteristics of collaboration and communication, with active listening toward shared decision-making:

I'm a collaborative leader. ... My leadership style is communicative. ... I like to hear from a wide range of different opinions and people. ... [They] have the opportunity to vent to me ... I'm approachable. And that allows them to be able to come to me for ... other future concerns or issues ... I think it's incredibly important to listen to people. ... I

try to do that active learning—active listening ... realizing that sometimes people just need to vent ... need to speak, and that you're able to get information if you just let them, ... then pool that information together. ... I feel comfortable with that leadership style because ... I'd rather say, "let's figure it out together."

Consequently, as relational leaders, all participants were highly communicative in their styles, not only in instructing, speaking openly, and sharing their vision, but also in maintaining an open-door policy and being approachable leaders. They stressed the importance of listening, and although it takes much of their time, it is the key component in information gathering and especially crucial in creating and maintaining good relationships.

CLM Theme 6: Pioneering moments: Emergent, interactive organizational processes in systemic reform. Participants seemed to express these pioneering moments as fluid, emerging, and interactive practices. They were able to adapt their college's or district's processes by using innovative, cyclical, and flexible, integrated planning for sustainability. Moreover, by developing and adapting entrepreneurial techniques such as risk-taking, building and sustaining partnerships, foundations, external advisory committees, and networks, these female executive leaders appeared to plan procedures using a "whole systems" approach. It's important to note participants of this study had CLM take place in crisis and in very challenging times when the California community college system experienced one of the worst budget crises and increased student enrollments in its history. They cultivated successful leadership practices into effective reform for their campuses with a continual, repetitive, collective commitment in their colleges and districts as internal change agents, responding and countering external challenges facing their community colleges during the severe 2008–2012 budget crisis, and in

strategic planning in the aftermath, during 2012–2013 economic recovery and time of relative stability.

Creating a sense of urgency: Clear expectations, accountability, and priority goal setting. Every participant articulated clear and high expectations on accountability, goal setting, planning, and transparency to their leadership team and college constituents, as primary when initiating a change, and with continual transparency of priorities to the campus at large. President Sara Schenectady described how expressing high expectations, overall accountability, and goal setting intersect:

I expect a pretty high level of performance on the part of everyone who works at this college ... I'm very much concerned about accountability because we have been given public money to do something very specific: ... so I try to make that as clear as I can in meetings when I'm expressing my expectations. ... We talk about goals, about who's going to do what by when ... we agree on what we're going to do ... why are we doing this ... why do we need to do that? ... These are the kinds of questions that I feel are essential for me to ask.

Through their communication and their ability to collaborate with others, participants spoke openly about the state of events on campus and in districts and the necessity to explain urgent needs. Vice President Anne Reina explained her method of creating a sense of urgency:

I was able to basically light a fire and... convince them, without actually giving them directives, that this is something that's important for our campus and this is something we're going to get into trouble for in the future, so you need to be able to do it ... because in the end I want them to be able to see and say ... there's really no choice. ... We have

to do it this way and agree to that. ... They're all in it together because ... it's the campus ... going through a massive amount of change.

Moreover, participants were able to accomplish this with commitment from constituents. Interim Chancellor Selma Flores described methods to create a sense of urgency in setting expectations, accountability, and priority goal setting by initiating standing meetings at the district - as first order of business when initiating change:

I initiated standing meetings ... for all these things that needed to be corrected. ... We had payroll bring its list and human resources had their list, and academic affairs had their list ... these huge lists. ... For next week's meeting, bring your top ten. So we identified for each area ... in visual concentric circles.... Which ones overlapped? And when we had three matches that became our priority. ... That's how we started to advance and to correct some of the problems that we were encountering.

Cultivating high-performance teams: Shared ownership by collaboration, negotiation, and collective buy-in. In cultivating collaborative work and collective commitment, President Sara Schenectady expressed their complementary nature and why consensus building creates accountability and group commitment:

The collaboration and work—its collective buy in that I'm trying to cultivate. Because ... it is collective responsibility and appropriately placed authority for the decisions that we make. ... I solicit ideas from them. ... We intertwine and tangle ... we call it spaghetti chart ... on a regular basis. ... There's an opportunity for them to express concerns, to share ideas ... to help shape the campus ... with regard to accreditation, with regard to the overall management of the institution, with regard to the financial challenges.

Leadership and group practices included modeling and negotiating middle ground by “reading” the room and what Vice President Anne Reina referenced as “spinning” the idea in negotiating a middle ground:

Teaming is communication ... trying to build a culture that we’re all stakeholders come to some sort of meeting ground to make something happen ... trying to negotiate and let go—not be so obstinate and realize that you can make certain headway in certain areas, but you may not be able to make 100 percent—and being able to read the room well ... being able to listen to what people’s issues are ... try to figure out a way of getting to the conclusion that you want based upon what you’re hearing, reading the personalities and spin it so it’s something that they feel more comfortable with ... a way that would make more sense to them, to allow them the opportunity to provide another solution ... since we’re in it together.

Participants encouraged high performance teaming procedures during leadership meetings and professional training by creating and encouraging built-in collaborative structures in inclusive units, such as teaming units through a shared-commitment model, encouraging collaborating, negotiation, and a committed culture in their institutions.

Adapting and developing methods and procedures in countering obstacles for innovation and sustainability in systemic reform. With transformation come obstacles, whether it is individual resistance, group opposition, or bureaucratic roadblocks. President Sara Schenectady spoke to the roots of most obstacles:

Two ground rules that I put out there on a regular basis with my administrative team: ... let’s assume that everybody has the best of intentions and let’s not jump to conclusions.

Violating those two rules are really the essence of what all of the obstacles are that we face in an organization.

A continual, cyclic reassessing in planning, decision making, and interest-based problem solving environment was essential whenever participants encountered obstacles. President Sara Schenectady explained:

We are just constantly reassessing where we are ... as we do our planning and make decisions –making sure ... we get the right information to the right people at the right time to make the right decisions. ... Then we have the best result. So when we're not having success I ... encourage, let's go back ... through our paces ... touch all the bases. ... So my role then is to ... find our common ground, our common interests. ... This is the idea of interest-based problem solving. ... The whole idea that you sit on the same side of the table. You're not adversaries. And across from you, in front of you—all of the people who are working on the issue. ... We start with what are we trying to achieve. ... Then we can work toward a solution that works for us all.

Participants developed methods and institutional processes to address obstacles; they were adaptive in nature and in response to the circumstance. Superintendent-President Darlene Huntersail explained,

You have to have a bag of skills ... and competencies that are eclectic in nature so that when you find yourself in a circumstance with a particular audience or desired outcome, you are ready to make the most of that circumstance. ... I'm focused ... very purposeful ... to work together and partner ... focused on what will the partnership yield that we couldn't do alone.

Hence, participants used such emergent, adaptive, interactive organizational processes to address obstacles to their reforms. In describing obstacles in a new construction project on her campus and its importance to the institution, President Sara Schenectady described her persistence with her whole-systems approach to implement institutional change:

I keep ... going back and dispelling those misconceptions, adding in more data, reaffirming the importance, marshaling all of the expert support and just the whole commitment that we have with the industry that we serve, with the students that we're serving ... faculty—every level ... 360 kind of approach.

As a result, overwhelmingly, participants expressed the need to develop and evolve methods discussed in institutional processes and structures when addressing obstacles to change initiatives. Interest-based problem solving, cyclic reassessment measures with a continual revamping in strategic planning were essential for female executive leaders in countering obstacles to innovation and sustaining transformative change toward systemic reform. By adapting and adjusting their overall leadership practices to the situation, participants continually developed mechanisms and methods, based on the situation, and involving large numbers of constituents in an interactive, whole-systems approach toward transformative organizational processes. In doing so, participants' commitment, perseverance, and entrepreneurial skills played a large part in gathering more data, soliciting expertise inside and outside of their organizations in an interactive and holistic approach, and instituting organizational change to sustain their campuses and districts.

Developing and adapting methods: Entrepreneurial organizational processes for innovation and sustainability. Participants described how they used and evolved methods and such as rebranding, risk-taking, partnerships, piloting techniques, establishing committees,

foundations, and networking structures typical in entrepreneurial sectors in leading reform initiatives and in encountering obstacles to change processes. Superintendent-President Darlene Huntersail summed the groups' experiences on risk-taking, rule-breaking, and the importance of forging networks and partnerships in human interactions when facilitating innovative endeavors and institutional change in her college and district:

I'm not afraid to try new things or take risks. I think you have to get outside of your own structures and the organization's structure sometimes ... network and bring together people who share a passion or an interest or a curiosity for something rather than bringing the logical players together. ... Bureaucracy impedes creativity. ... I'm always trying to figure out my way around a rule ... versus solving the problem, reasoning, and getting better at dealing with the human interaction that comes about in the dynamics of the engagement to get to the goal.

When an idea, project, or program did not work on the first or second round, participants used continual persistence with entrepreneurial techniques such as rebranding. Rebranding an idea or plan toward a change initiative meant trying new things for reengagement:

A technique that's used in merchandising and entrepreneurship is really the same concept ... you rebrand it. ... May still be all the same stuff, but you put it together a different way and then you catch the interest or you get the view from somebody looking at it in a fresh way. ... As the college's leader, then I need to find a way to keep everybody focused, and due to this repackaging, until, ultimately, we are successful. (President Sara Schenectady)

Participants also used piloting initiatives and projects to develop or adapt organizational processes for innovation and sustainability. Interim Chancellor Selma Flores explained how the

district used advanced planning and piloting to implement a change in a new software system for student information reporting:

Our admissions, our assessments, our orientation, financial aid, all of that, will be impacted ... so we began planning about 4 years ago. ... We chose two colleges that would pilot our student information system next fall ... to run parallel ... to our current system. ... We're going to be able to switch over to the new system a year in advance of what we had anticipated ... primarily because we've had all of our user groups involved in the discussion and piloting efforts.

Moreover, networking, ability, and willingness to initiate partnerships, especially in periods of decline, was another way to use planning processes to initiate reform. Superintendent-President Darlene Huntersail explained,

In an emergency—in a declining time— we never say no to partnerships. ... We are more inclined to develop them. ... We have developed more partnerships in these last 5 years of decline ... because the other colleges said “I’m sorry, times are tough, we can’t do this.” ... So I think that when you’re in decline mode, you say to the partner, “Yes, we’d love to do this, but we can’t put any money ... we can put space towards that, we can put the talents of our staff towards that, we can figure out how to engage our students in this. But as far as the money we can’t do that. But we can offset some of the cost to making that happen.” That’s a better partnership anyway. A partnership isn’t where one side does all the work and the other side gets all the benefit; ... it’s the bridges you need to build at any given moment.

Participants also appeared to make use of foundations, advisory committees, and networks in and outside their larger campus and district communities in leading reform

initiatives and when encountering obstacles to change processes due to budgetary constraints.

President Sara Schenectady described her role in her college entrepreneurial activities:

We have several offices who are very engaged in innovation, entrepreneurial kinds of activities. ... They plant seeds for ideas ... [and] do some of our best work ... in serving our community: ... conduct major events, donations, positive press, ... establish an advisory committee to strengthen, enrich, expand, make more visible our college foundation ... I think the key role that I play there is pulling together the right mix of people, so that the effort will gel ... that we create a synergy together than what we would have individually.

Last, in a people-driven profession, when people are invested and involved in planning change processes in their colleges, they become part of the change movement as agents of change toward sustainable growth. Superintendent-President Darlene Huntersail explained,

People are naturally resistant to change ... but we facilitate change all day long, all week long, all month long, all year long here ... because we buy into our planning processes ... that's the key. And when people develop a plan, they want to move that plan ... so they then, they become part of the change movement; they are the change agents.

Summary

In this chapter, I set out to document the experiences of four levels of executive leaders in California community colleges and districts: an interim chancellor of a comprehensive district, a superintendent-president of a multi-college district, and a president and a vice president of a community college. My goal was to elucidate the reality of research participants by examining the leadership experiences and leadership practices of female CEOs who have successfully led their institutions to systemic reform. Emphasis throughout has been on using participants' own

words, with the use of illustrative quotations, to portray the richness and complexity of their experiences and perspectives (Seidman, 2012).

As a result, this chapter presented three discreet categories of results from data analysis: profiles, profile themes, and critical learning-moment themes. The chapter began by profiling the female executive leaders in this study based on three pathways that emerged for all four participants in this study: (a) the influences of familial upbringing/background, (b) educational path, and (c) career and professional track. Next I presented the three profile themes from thematic data analysis of participant profiles: (a) shared influences and support structures, (b) internal and external motivation, optimism, and willingness to volunteer beyond their call of duty, and (c) gender issues and leadership-style differences experienced in previous leadership positions. Then, in examining leadership experiences and leadership practices of female executive participants who have led their campuses to systemic reform, I used thematic analysis to identify six main themes of CLMs of transformative leadership behaviors and innovative organizational practices as my phenomena of interest: (a) realization and reconciliation moments: challenges of leadership in struggles, disappointments, and compromises; (b) impactful moments: leadership is a lifestyle, a commitment and a calling in shaping daily lives of constituents; (c) empowerment moments: stories reinforcing self-worth and belief; (d) capacity-building moments: mentoring and paying it forward, the need for future leadership development of women in community colleges; (e) relational moments: egalitarian leadership behavioral styles of change agents; and (f) pioneering moments: emergent, interactive organizational processes in systemic reform.

In the next chapter I interpret and discuss the results of data findings in evaluating the study's research questions and conceptual themes from the literature review through the

interpretation of thematic data analysis using the study's multi-theoretical lens. I conclude with recommendations for future research, policy, and practice. Specifically, grounded in the interpretation of this study's findings, in Chapter 5 I elucidate suggestions to improve educational policy and leadership practice toward systemic reform in the community college setting.

Chapter Five Findings: Discussion and Conclusion

Introduction

This chapter commences with a brief synopsis of the study problem, purpose statement, research questions, methodology, and a summary of major findings, answering the two research questions. I provide an in-depth interpretation, analysis, and synthesis of findings related to the larger body of literature through a multitheoretical conceptual framework, and interpretive themes that emerged from analysis. Recommendations for change in educational policy and practice are based on the findings presented in Chapter 4. I provide specific action plans for district and community college administrators, team leaders, and policy makers by advancing current knowledge with best practices used in educational implementation of transformative organizational-change reform in the community college sector of higher education. I will identify specific issues to improve educational policy and practice in action planning for institutional change, advancing educational practice at the local, state, and federal levels. The chapter concludes with recommendations for topics that may spur closer examination in future research.

Summary of Research Study

This study explored the critical learning moments (CLM) phenomena and transformative educational-leadership practices of women executive leaders of 2-year public colleges and districts in California. The chapter includes thoughts about what is essential for women CEOs to describe these CLM as meaningful in their overall leadership practice and what transformative leadership practices they used to lead their colleges to systemic reform. I sought to examine and document the leadership experiences and leadership practices of known change agents, women CEOs serving in four distinctive leadership levels—an Interim Chancellor of a large

comprehensive district, a Superintendent-President of another multicollege district, a President and a Vice President of an ethnically diverse campus in the largest community college district in the nation—who have each successfully led their institutions to systemic reform.

In phenomenological studies, researchers employ criterion-based sampling of “people who have experienced the same phenomenon” (Bloomberg & Volpe, 2012, p. 104). I used criterion sampling to limit the participant sample to women executive leaders with 10 or more years of experience in high leadership positions in public higher education who are over the age of 40, hold a graduate degree, and currently serve as an administrative leader in an executive position in an ethnically diverse, public, 2-year community college or district in southern California. Using a phenomenological multisite case-study design, I explored two research questions: (a) What is essential for women executive leaders at California community colleges to describe critical learning moments as meaningful in their leadership practice? and (b) What transformative leadership practices have women leaders used to lead their campuses to systemic reform?

I analyzed data from two in-depth interview transcripts in multiple, iterative stages and used an analytical approach guided by the phenomenological research tradition. I garnered three discreet themes of results: leadership profiles, profile themes, and CLM. I developed participant profiles based on three areas: the influences of familial background, education path, and career and professional track toward executive positions. These three areas guided the development of participant profiles in crafting the stories of women’s leadership styles and experiences. Three profile themes emerged: (a) shared influences and support structures, (b) internal and external motivation, optimism, and willingness to volunteer beyond their call of duty, and (c) gender issues and leadership-style differences experienced in previous leadership positions.

To develop thematic connections, I searched for patterns among excerpts in categories (Seidman, 2006). In exploring initial codes and categories and moving from coded data to meaningful data, thematic patterns of categories emerged (Dey, 1993; Grbich, 2007). I developed coding schemes aligned with Bloomberg and Volpe (2012) to analyze qualitative data, following the process of coding, clustering, and thematizing. Through a multitheoretical lens, the conceptual framework merged concepts of female-leadership-style theories on transformative change and critical feminism to explore CLM, and the meaning female executive leaders ascribed to their CLM to better understand how they are leading toward transformative systemic reform. Six patterns and themes of CLM of transformative-leadership behaviors and innovative practices emerged, identified through thematic analysis describing leadership experiences and leadership practices of women executive participants who have led their campuses to systemic reform.

Discussion of Findings

Leadership's pathways: Difficult choices for women. Although participants came from diverse backgrounds, they shared strong influences and supportive structures that supported future executive-leadership roles: supportive familial upbringing where education was valued, having supervising male mentors in the workplace and female role models, and the support of encouraging husbands. Participants' lived histories and leadership paths to becoming CEOs were difficult. With much hard work and sacrifice in their educational and professional career paths, they navigated to become CEOs. The women executive leaders sacrificed much in their personal lives, limiting interactions with friends and family due to busy work schedules and expressed nostalgia from missing quality time and having to uproot and move multiple times. Four of the five chose their leadership careers over having children due to the strains of their chosen field.

Study findings supported previous empirical research showing few women leaders in higher education executive leadership (Bright, 2010; Bower, & Wolverton, 2009; Cejda, 2008; Cook, 2012; Chin, 2004; Eagly & Johnson, 1990; Hopewell et al., 2009; Krause, 2009; Miligan, 2010; Pflanz, 2011; Townsend & Twombly, 2007). Findings proposed connections among social forces and gender roles in women CEOs' leadership pathways. Male CEOs on the same track typically do not face such difficult decisions in choosing their career trajectories, given their gender and larger societal expectations of male CEOs.

Perseverance: Internal and external motivating forces. Perhaps because of influences and supportive structures, an unwavering drive and commitment to contribute to the field of education, and optimistic outlooks, women executive leaders expressed the need to prove themselves and persevered through difficult personal and professional episodes, driven to succeed in their roles as executive leaders and agents of change for their colleges. Because internal motivation played a large factor in participants' sense of purpose, personal belief in their ability to contribute and positively impact their field, the community college mission, and their leadership profession, they exhibited strong willingness to go beyond their call of duty. Having positive predispositions, women executive leaders continually challenged themselves professionally. With self-confidence, they met external challenges in times of crisis as change agents, maintaining a strong belief that they had power to change the future.

Gender issues and leadership style differences. All participants expressed the need to be strategic in seeking and advancing to higher positions of leadership. They actively accessed career-growth opportunities, but felt the lack of opportunity for advancement. Extant empirical research findings gave evidence that organizational barriers limit women's mobility in higher learning institutions, restricting their ability to access executive-leadership positions (Bower, &

Wolverton, 2009; Bright, 2010; Cejda, 2008; Chin, 2004; Cook, 2012; Eagly & Johnson, 1990; Eddy, 2010; Eddy & Cox, 2008; Hopewell et al., 2009; Krause, 2009; Miligan, 2010; Nolan-Hoeksema, 2010; Pflanz, 2001; Townsend & Twombly, 2007; van Engen & Willemsen, 2004; Weisman & Vaughan, 2007). Links between hierarchical structures of community college organizations may impede women's direct path to executive roles within their colleges; women leaders needed to be strategic, leaving their current colleges and districts to advance to their next leadership positions.

Gender was individually and organizationally significant; participants experienced sexism in the workplace and perceived gender differences in leadership style in past leadership positions. Community colleges have hierarchical structures and studies point to issues of gender and sexism facing women leaders (Bower & Wolverton, 2009; Eddy, 2010; Leatherwood & Williams, 2008; Milligan, 2010; Pflanz, 2011; Tedrow & Rhodes, 1999). Although many low- and middle-tier management leaders in California 2-year colleges are women, and female executive leadership is at a higher percentage in 2-year institutions than in universities and private colleges, gender remains significant and must be explored critically to enhance exposure to these issues in national discourse about community colleges. For the women executive leaders in this study, gender was significant; perhaps even a cultural force. They faced problems of sexism in their leadership roles, in opportunities for internal advancement to becoming a CEO, and leadership-style differences in their organizational contexts.

Critical Learning Moments in leadership practice. I developed the term CLM as self-reflective opportunities wherein lived histories of leadership experiences intersected with organizational knowledge and educational practice that led to systemic reform for colleges and districts. This study's findings related to the first research question: "What is essential for

women executive leaders at California community colleges to describe CLMs as meaningful in their leadership practice?” confirmed that CLM conveyed significant and insightful perspectives for women executive-leader participants, including reconciliatory moments when facing major challenges and struggles, realizing the necessity to compromise. Participants described their leadership practice as impactful and empowering, not only a lifestyle and a calling, requiring total commitment. Sharing their leadership experiences and stories during the interview process reinforced their self-worth and belief in a higher cause.

Struggles and compromises. The challenges of their positions, the struggles, disappointments, and compromises were essential when describing meaningful CLMs in their leadership practices with regard to this study’s first research question. As individuals and as female executive leaders who transformed 2-year public higher education institutions, they needed to express practicality and flexibility in their leadership approach. Learning as they led, they had a strong inclination to continually try new avenues, take substantial risks, and were aware enough to be able to know when to step back, reassess, listen, and pool information when leading small or large scale organizational change. Supported by literature on organizational change (Burns, 2005; Kezar, 2001; Kotter, 1995; Northouse, 2012; Senge, 1990; Wheatley, 2006), participants experienced various obstacles and resistance to change when introducing, implementing, or instituting reform initiatives or processes in their colleges and districts. They found new ways to lead, realizing which battles to pick, the need to compromise, and willingness to change their leadership approach midstream when met with roadblocks.

A significant challenge was a sense of disconnection between colleges and districts. In addition to limited resources and resistance to change initiatives as the main challenges to their institutions and leadership abilities, they expressed the extremely intense political nature of their

environments. Women executive leaders at the college level each expressed very strong feelings regarding their struggles with districts' lack of support for their leadership authority, the politically driven environment of community colleges, and the lack of commitment of members of the board of trustees; participants at the district level commented on college presidents' tendencies to compete, noncompliance, and lack of comprehensive understanding and long-term planning, as crucial structural issues and interactions between college and district executive leaders arose.

Leadership as an empowering lifestyle. Findings related to the first research question: “What is essential for women executive leaders at California community colleges to describe CLMs as meaningful in their leadership practice?” confirmed that CLM conveyed significant and insightful perspectives for women executive-leader as they overwhelmingly expressed the impact they believed their leadership made on the daily lives of constituents. Women leaders viewed their leadership practice as impactful and expressed an unwavering dedication and commitment to making a difference in the lives of students and a wide range of constituents. Their worldview and understanding of their leadership calling, coupled with furthering the community college mission to service underserved students, presented an even larger context of the impact of their leadership contribution.

Despite the difficulties of their positions, their leadership practice reinforced their beliefs, commitments, and leadership abilities. Leadership contributed to overall self-worth, enhancing self-awareness and self-confidence. They viewed leadership as an all-encompassing lifestyle, a worthy and righteous cause, and perceived their lifetime commitment as a higher calling. Women CEOs attached considerable meaning to the impact of their leadership, as the true test of their leadership ability, as an individual, as a leader, and as a female executive. The women

participant CEOs perceived leadership not only as impacting others, but empowering in their own lives as well.

Relational and egalitarian leadership styles as change agents. Findings related to the second research question, “What transformative leadership practices have women leaders used to lead their campuses to systemic reform?” confirmed highly relational, people-oriented communicative behaviors and egalitarian leadership styles as change agents. Previous researchers have shown that women tend to lead using more participative and collaborative styles than men, more likely to use transformational-leadership behaviors associated with contemporary notions of effective leadership (Costello, 2012; Eagly et al., 2005; Eddy & Cox, 2008; Ginsberg & Wlodkowski, 2009; Leatherwood & Williams, 2008; Miligan, 2010; Northouse, 2012; Pflanz, 2011; van Engen & Willemsen, 2004).

Further, findings confirmed Milligan’s (2010) study of women presidents’ leadership styles characterized by openness, collaboration, and confidence; Tedrow and Rhodes’s (1999) finding that women are more likely to embrace an active and instrumental approach, Krause’s (2009) outcome that women tend to lead by relational style, embracing, mentoring, and forming strong team trainings and networks, and Pflanz’s (2011) findings that the leadership styles and characteristics of participants exemplify concepts of transformative leadership by using high levels of communication of future goals, role-modeling, gaining follower confidence, trust, and innovation in institutional planning.

However, this study’s findings regarding participants’ greater use of egalitarian and democratic style, was not simply adaptive in that they only used the style that produced the most favorable evaluations for their colleges as previously indicated in Northouse (2012) and van Engen & Willemsen (2004) studies. In fact, as relational leaders, this study’s participants

expressed how and when they used particular leadership behaviors and explained their leadership styles in enacting and sustaining reform initiatives in their institutions during crisis and even when their colleges did not “meet numbers” during assessment cycles. As relational executives, participants exhibited leadership techniques that were profoundly people oriented; instructive and direct, compassionate, and considerate communicators. They gathered and pooled information, listening to all viewpoints as part of their decision-making matrix. Using an egalitarian and democratic style, encouraging team-leading, speaking openly, and sharing their vision as approachable leaders, the women stressed the importance of active listening and remaining accessible as critical components in forging and maintaining relationships.

Pioneering emergent, interactive organizational processes. Due to their democratic leadership styles, relation-driven leadership behaviors in forging and maintaining relationships, cultivation of collaborative responsibility, and transparent communication in shared decision making, participants experienced great success as change agents. Their leadership qualities of commitment to constituents and themselves, motivation, and perseverance, contributed to pioneering moments of initiating, implementing, and maintaining interactive, flexible forms of organizational change. Findings related to the second research question, “What transformative leadership practices have women leaders used to lead their campuses to systemic reform?” confirmed that change agents created and promoted innovation, were not afraid to ‘stir the pot’, and were inclined toward partnerships, collaborations, and a shared vision in leading. The study’s results confirmed that self-organizing models of second-tier, systemic institutional change emerges when innovative change agents promote and adapt whole-system interactive organizational processes and structures (Kotter, 1995; Kezar, 2001; Wheatley, 2006).

Women CEOs pioneered emergent, interactive, cyclical reform processes on their campuses by being instructive, directive, and persistent in their management practices. By adapting the entrepreneurial techniques of risk-taking, building and sustaining partnerships, foundations, external advisory committees, and networks, they created a sense of urgency, accountability, and shared ownership through high-performance teaming. They integrated planning for sustainability in a whole-systems approach. They responded to and countered external challenges facing community colleges during the severe 2008–2012 budget crisis and in strategic planning in the aftermath, during the 2012–2013 economic recovery and time of relative stability. They fostered capacity building by mentoring other women leaders in their institutions and districts.

Clear expectations, accountability, and priority goal setting in collaborating and negotiating. Findings confirmed managerial-change (Burns, 2005; Kotter, 1996; Malm, 2008) and educational-leadership literature (AACCC, 2012; Kezar, 2001; Northouse, 2012; Wheatley 2006) but with specifically to women’s ability to create a sense of urgency in a shared-ownership culture. Participants articulated clear and high expectations on accountability, goal setting, planning, and transparency to their leadership team and college constituents when initiating a change, continually transmitting priorities to the campus at large with regard to first research question on what is essential for in describing CLMs in their leadership practice toward reform. Through communication and collaboration, participants spoke openly about the state of events on their campuses and districts, explaining urgent needs during crises and their aftermath.

Findings corroborated previous research showing community colleges are highly patriarchal, traditional institutions, yet loosely coupled, highly team- and collaboration-oriented organizations as well, involving all stakeholders in a shared-governance process (Boggs, 2011;

Eddy, 2010; Lencioni, 2002; Rosenbaum et. al, 2006; Wheelan, 2010). With regard to the second research question on transformative leadership practices, participants encouraged high-performance teaming during leadership meetings and professional training, creating and encouraging collaborative structures by modeling and negotiating a committed culture in their institutions. In cultivating collaborative work and collective commitment, executive women leaders expressed these concepts as complementary, sharing why consensus building creates accountability and ownership, confirming studies showing successful reform initiatives must involve all stakeholders in a shared-governance process characterized by whole-systems change (Burns, 2005; Eddy, 2011; Kezar, 2001, Malm, 2008; Northouse, 2012; Senge, 1990; Wheatley, 2006).

Countering obstacles to innovate and sustain systemic reform. With transformation come obstacles: individual resistance, group opposition, and bureaucratic roadblocks. In explaining CLM in their leadership practice, change agents CEOs expressed cyclical reassessment in a planning, decision making, and problem-solving environment was essential when they encountered obstacles. Critical feminist literature strongly sustains the belief that organizational change is central to improving the condition of women; the criticality lays in a dialogue of change in institutional organizational structures among the leadership team (Bower & Wolverson, 2009; Bright, 2010; Cejda, 2008, Chin, 2004; Eddy & Cox, 2008; Milligan, 2012; Tedrow & Rhoads, 1999). Findings substantiate empirical literature on systemic improvements characterized by long-term, second-tiered, whole-systems change that must engage transformative practices by leaders attempting paradigmatic shifts toward successful reform initiatives in traditional male-dominated organizations (Burns, 2005; Kezar, 2001, Malm, 2008; Northouse, 2012; Pflanz, 2011; Senge, 1990; Wheatley, 2006).

Findings related to the second research question, “What transformative leadership practices have women leaders used to lead their campuses to systemic reform?” confirmed that change agents participants developed and evolved methods such as interest-based problem solving, cyclic-reassessment measures, and a continual revamping in strategic planning, essential to counter obstacles to innovation and sustain transformative change toward systemic reform. They adapted and adjusted leadership practices to the situation at hand, continually developing and evolving mechanisms and methods, and involving large parts of constituents in an interactive, whole-systems approach to transform organizational processes. Participants’ commitment, perseverance, and entrepreneurial skills were pivotal in gathering data and soliciting expertise.

Entrepreneurial organizational processes for innovation and sustainability.

Collectively, participants evolved other transformative leadership practices in reform, such as methods in rebranding, risk taking, partnerships, and piloting techniques and established committees, foundations, and networking structures typically used in entrepreneurial and business sectors to lead reform initiatives and overcome obstacles to change. When an idea, project, or program did not work, they persisted using entrepreneurial techniques. They piloted initiatives and projects to develop or adapt organizational processes for innovation and sustainability. In periods of decline, they formed partnerships for college reforms. They used foundations, advisory committees, and networks in and outside their campus and district communities to lead reform initiatives and overcome budgetary constraints. As players in a people-driven profession, they invested in and planned change processes.

Future leadership development of women CEOs. All participants had male mentors and female role models in their career paths who were instrumental in influencing and challenging

them, modeling, teaching leadership skills, and encouraging them to seek higher positions. Participants shared a CLM in their reform practice was the need to develop future leaders in community colleges and supported women and men leaders by modeling, mentoring, and providing guidance as transformative practices they've used. Participants specifically sought f leaders with qualities of commitment, motivation, and confidence (but not necessarily formative skills) when assisting in women's leadership capacity building. They believed that effective leadership can be learned and taught to others by modeling and mentoring.

Participants were optimistic about the future of women in community college executive leadership, but not as hopeful about the future of leadership and training in general in community colleges and districts; they noted the lack of preparedness and the failure of educational institutions to train future leaders; they found state policy to unnecessarily deter people from pursuing leadership positions. They considered modeling, mentoring, and providing leadership guidance for future women leaders significant, and therefore, findings support previous research (Green, 2011; Krause 2009; Pflanz, 2011; Milligan, 2010) on succession pathways for leadership development and for community colleges to meet the needs of future leadership development in California in response to unprecedented retirement and vacancies in the executive leadership level.

Implication for Policy and Practice

This study provided a rich understanding of the issues surrounding 2-year colleges and districts, institutional processes, and the political and external forces that fill participants' personal stories. Findings revealed new ways of leading and interacting in community colleges and districts, responding to major institutional challenges in debilitating state budget crises.

This critical research aimed to create a catalyst for discussions about social and gender inequality and reform. Through the critical lens of women executive leaders, findings shed light on how transformative change can best be instituted in diverse 2-year colleges facing a multitude of pressures to improve educational policy and practice. This project is significant for educational leadership and institutional-reform practices, discerning how women executive leaders use transformative, innovative-change practices to lead campuses to systemic reform. Study outcomes contribute new knowledge about female executive leaders in 2-year community colleges as adaptive, emergent reformers who use transformational-leadership styles best suited for educational systemic reform in times of disequilibrium and chaos, and ensuing periods of stability and growth. In examining the meaning of CLM of women executive leaders at community colleges through the critical, advocacy, or participatory framework, I provided a platform for community college women executives to narrate their experiences, address inequalities, and better understand CLM in their leadership practice toward reform.

Findings revealed a multitude of challenges and complexities of contemporary female executive leaders' experiences from first-hand accounts, sharing the CLM in their practices toward systemic reform. These pioneers initiate emergent and interactive organizational processes in systemic reform, especially as unprecedented external forces confront their organizations. They are adaptive, developing methods and procedures to counter obstacles; they use entrepreneurial organizational processes to innovate and sustain reform practices. In advancing a new profile of contemporary women leaders toward organizational change in 2-year institutions, future researchers and practitioners in education and policy can better understand current leadership experiences and best practices toward systemic reform, urgently calling for reform of 2-year higher education institutions by national, state, and regional authorities.

I recommend specific actions for district and community college administrators, team leaders, and policy makers to advance educational leaders' best processes and procedures, practiced by change-agent leaders to generate and maintain long-term institutional change. The following topics may guide closer examination of ways to improve educational policy and practice at the local, state, and federal levels, using action planning to advance systemic reform in the underrepresented and underfunded community college system of higher education:

- Advance college and district institutional action to improve the planning, developing, implementing, and evaluating of organizational and inter-institutional processes.
- Rigid organizational structures and roles may have caused a rift in interactions between districts and colleges at the executive level, especially during budgetary crises. Third parties should assess communication channels, structural forces, interactions, and organizational processes between districts and college campuses.
- Increase community college districts' budgetary, line-item resources and provide executive leaders more authority to pilot, initiate, and implement change initiatives.
- Evaluate state policy to determine factors that deter leaders, especially underrepresented women of minority status and those of varied ethnic backgrounds from pursuing executive leadership positions toward social justice and equitable representation in higher educational administrative leadership positions.
- Evaluate community college hierarchical structures to analyze issue preventing the internal advancement of women toward executive leadership positions.
- Continue funding of state and university-level leadership development programs such as California State University but add more rigorous academic and practical training while bridging program components with direct leadership placement via mentoring,

shadowing, and internships in CA community colleges for a more comprehensive leadership-training programs for future leadership development.

- Mentorship programs at the district level should prepare future CEOs in community colleges to address the gap in leadership turnover and future leadership development.
- Actively recruit and support new and current middle-tier women leaders, specifically minority women of color and ethnicity, for future development in community college leadership by women administrators at the college and district levels by modeling, mentoring, and providing leadership guidance.

These specific steps and action plans will improve processes for colleges to plan, pilot, and implement institutional change, thereby advancing leadership development and best practices toward systemic reform in the community colleges.

Recommendations for Future Research and Conclusion

This study's main methodology of in-depth interviewing led me to a deeper appreciation and comprehension of the challenges and experiences of change-agent women leaders in times of crisis and growth, and a more conscious awareness of the power of the social and organizational context of executive leadership experiences in California community colleges and districts. The strength of in-depth interviewing was my ability to comprehend the details of women executive leaders' experiences from their point of view: how their experiences interact with influential economic, social, and organizational forces in the context in which they live and work, and in finding interconnections in a shared context (Seidman, 2006).

Researchers may adhere to Seidman's (2006) Three-Interview Series in a phenomenological interviewing structure and provide less structured questions for participants. Replicating this study in a state other than California, increasing the sample size of women

CEOs, adding another layer to the level of leadership, such as including CIOs or studying women's experiences at all leadership levels site (s) can generate greater diversification of data. Since the final sample size of this study consisted of women executive leaders, of whom the majority elected to not have children during the trajectory of their career paths, future researchers may wish to explore women with children and their experiences toward advancing to CEO positions. Researchers may wish to explore women at all leadership levels.

Future researchers may examine organizational forces and observe interactions between district managers, boards of trustees, and college leaders. Internal social, gender, and organizational interactions during transformational stages also needs closer examination. Researchers may study the effects of transformation on colleges' persistence rates. Practitioners and academics in the field of education and leadership alike agree that while many factors contribute to transformational change for student success, it is leadership that matters most. Therefore, in specifically examining the effects of a leader's college reform outcomes on the students' persistence and completion outcomes may show significant impact in future, and needs further investigation. As a base for comparative analysis, I suggest exploring CLMs of male executive leader-change agents using the same research questions at the community college and district levels to explore perceptions and overall leadership experiences toward reform. Future researchers may also examine how these concepts apply to systemic reform for social justice and equity for underrepresented leaders, including minority women of color and women of diverse ethnic backgrounds.

This study breaks new ground on the concept of critical learning moments in the educational leadership practice of women change agents in two-year public community colleges and the need to explore the meaning they ascribe to CLM in their leadership practice to better

understand how they are leading their organizations to systemic reform. Furthermore, this study appears to be unique relative to previous studies on transformative leadership practices of women executive leader change agents in CA community college colleges and districts. In approaching administration and leadership as praxis, a practical action - this study aimed at exploring the critical learning moments and the taken for granted status quo of woman executive leadership experiences and perceptions in their current environments. Through reflection and analysis of the essence of CLM phenomena in their leadership practice, findings help us better understand the complexities of the political, economic and social conditions toward the processes of empowerment and transformational systemic organizational reform in community colleges.

It's critically important that educational leaders and administrators comprehend current challenges and practices in community college campus reform to keep abreast on transformative leadership best practices for their own campuses and districts. Given the trends and nature of school budget cuts there will be recurrent issues in generating revenue and allocating resources for schools that will continue to dominate the discussion at both state and national levels. Therefore, college and district administrators must have a basic understanding of the various sources and entrepreneurial practices being used by practitioners to confront environmental challenges today for generating revenues. Furthermore, findings indicate that leadership training, mentor programs, and professional development activities at the district and college campus sites are crucial to developing future community college leaders and the leadership pipeline and with a special regard to minority women of color and ethnicities, given the current state on CEO retirements and future vacancies.

As a phenomenological critical study, it confirms previous feminist theorists' findings (Eddy, 2010; Chin, 2004; English 2008; Gilligan, 1993; Noddings, 1992) on organizational

change being central to improving social, political and economically equitable reform for women. Furthermore, findings reveal how women executive leaders change agents stress the importance of all constituents in a shared, collaborative buy in culture with the ethics of care in fostering and in maintaining relationships as priority, as relational leaders in a traditionally male-dominated community college organization. This study offers a reconceptualization of administration based strongly on the perceptions, beliefs and experiences of women participant executive leaders by presenting new information on the realities of women executive leaders' lives with regard their pathways to leadership positions by hearing from firsthand accounts on their overall CLM and transformative leadership practices toward reform.

Study's findings confirm postmodern theorists Rexford Brown (1983) assertion that educational improvements will require new kinds of leadership; that "we need leaders to create conversation, to change the levels and kinds of discourse...and to simulate inquiry, questioning, problem solving, and the focus on learning for everyone in the system..." (p.3). Findings confirm that women practitioners who confront today's environment are willing to risk the perils of the path through chaos, which leads to knowledge, growth, order, and regeneration...these leaders help a system to reform, renew, reconfigure, and recreate itself to better suit the new demands an environment (Brown, 1983). They were not afraid to stir the pot; they are entrepreneurial, innovative change agents inclined toward individual and institutional partnerships and collaborations toward shared vision for leadership roles (Burns, 2005; Kezar, 2001, Kotter, 1995; Malm, 2008; 2012; Senge, 1990, 2006).

With a fuller appreciation of the complexities and difficulties of organizational change and transformative leadership practices in higher education today, findings break new ground in illuminating the previous gap in empirical knowledge surrounding critical learning moments

phenomena in the leadership experiences and leadership practices of women executive change agents at 2-year community colleges and districts in California. It's important to note participants of this study had CLM take place in crisis and in very challenging times, when the California community college system experienced one of the worst budget crises and increased student enrollments in its history. They cultivated successful leadership practices into effective reform for their campuses with a continual, repetitive, collective commitment in their colleges and districts as internal change agents, responding and countering external challenges facing their community colleges during the severe 2008–2012 budget crisis, and in strategic planning in the aftermath, during 2012–2013 economic recovery and time of relative stability. In informing educational policy and leadership practice, findings revealed the challenges women leaders face with economic, political, and budgetary issues in leading their colleges, and social issues with regard to district and college CEO leaders' interactions, and gender issues with regard to sexism and bigotry encountered in their organizations. Findings contribute to building transformative-change theory, providing a better understanding of how, why, and when women change-agent leaders use reform practices in leading systemic change in their organizations.

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Appendix A: Research Invitation

Research Invitation

**CALIFORNIA STATE UNIVERSITY, NORTHRIDGE
MICHAEL D. EISNER COLLEGE OF EDUCATION
DOCTORAL PROGRAM (ED.D.): EDUCATIONAL LEADERSHIP
Exploring the Critical Learning Moments of Community College Women
Executives: A Phenomenological Study of Transformative Educational Leadership
Practices**

INVITATION TO PARTICIPATE IN RESEARCH

Email from Hawa Ghaus-Kelley to potential female participants who are currently executive leaders of California community colleges.

Dear President/Vice President, Chancellor/Vice Chancellor, Superintendent,

I am writing to inform you about my dissertation study regarding the experiences of women executive leaders in California community colleges. I am a doctoral candidate conducting this study as part of the Ed.D. degree requirements.

The purpose of my dissertation study is to explore the meaning of experiences for women executive leaders at California community colleges to better understand the essence of critical learning moments in their leadership practice. In exploring what meaning that community college women executive leaders ascribe to critical learning moments, I hope to understand how women executives are (a) leading organizational change and (b) gender reform efforts through a narrative form in a multi-case phenomenological case study approach. This study will add new knowledge to existing information regarding practical approaches in the field of educational reform and abstract theoretical approaches to better understand what is essential for women executives at California community colleges to describe critical learning moment as meaningful in their leadership practice for organizational change and systemic reform.

Your contribution in this study would be to participate in a pair of interviews, one 60 minute one-on-one interview and another 60-90 minute one-one-one interview within the months of May through December of 2013. Any personally identifiable characteristics, such as your name or school, will not appear in the study. Participating in this study is completely voluntary and you may withdraw at any time. Your time investment in this study is greatly appreciated. If you would like to participate, please contact me, Hawa Ghaus-Kelley at hawaghauskelley@yahoo.com or (661)714-7529. Thank you in advance for considering participation in this study.

Best,
Hawa Ghaus-Kelley
hawaghauskelley@yahoo.com
(661) 714-752

Appendix B: Informed Consent Form

Informed Consent Form

**CALIFORNIA STATE UNIVERSITY, NORTHRIDGE
MICHAEL D. EISNER COLLEGE OF EDUCATION
DOCTORAL PROGRAM (ED.D.): EDUCATIONAL LEADERSHIP
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CONSENT TO ACT AS A HUMAN RESEARCH SUBJECT

You are asked to participate in a research study conducted by Hawa Ghaus-Kelley. You were selected as a possible participant in this study because you are (1) a woman executive leader, (2) affiliated with a two-year public college in California and (3) are willing to share your experiences and perceptions. Your participation in this research study is voluntary.

Purpose of the Study

The overall purpose of this study will is to explore the meaning of experiences for women executive leaders at California community colleges in order to better understand the meaning and essence of critical learning moments in their leadership practice. In exploring the meaning that community college women executive leaders ascribe to critical learning moments, I hope to explore and better understand how women executives are leading organizational change and reform efforts through a narrative form in a multi-case phenomenological case study approach.

Procedures

If you elect to participate in this study, you will be asked to complete two 60-90 minute one-on-one interviews with the researcher.

Potential Risks and Discomforts to Participants

Given the purpose of the study on experiences and issues that may be personal, some interview question could be more sensitive, including questions related to experiences with and/or perceptions of leading, reflecting on the meaning of your experiences, reform efforts, organizational change processes, interactions within your institution and feelings about who you are as a leader. You may elect not to answer any of the questions with which you feel uneasy and still remain as a participant in the study.

Potential Benefits to Participants

You may not benefit personally from your participation in this study. However, this study addresses the need to explore the meaning of critical learning moments in the leadership practices of women executive leaders of two-year public colleges in California. Specifically, there is a lack of empirical and conceptual literature on what is essential for women executives to lead organizational change and systemic reform in two-year institutions of higher education today. As a participant in the one-on-one interviews, you may develop a greater awareness of

the development of your own leading experiences which may facilitate change for you personally. In addition, findings from this study may contribute to our knowledge on the subject since there is a necessity to bridge the gap of knowledge between the practical approaches in the field of practice and abstract theoretical approaches to better understand what is essential for women executives at California community colleges to describe a critical learning moment as meaningful in their leadership practice for organizational change and systemic reform. The information gleaned from the study may lead to greater awareness among higher education stakeholders at large: executive leaders, particularly women, national, state, local policy makers, board of trustees, academics, practitioners, and future students who seek to explore what is essential for women executives to lead organizational change and systemic reform within the context of higher education.

Payment to Participants for Participation

Research participants will not be paid for their participation in this study.

Audio Recording of Participants

During the course of the project, participants may be audio recorded. Your initials here _____ signify your consent to be audio recorded. You will be audio recorded for reasons related to data analysis and interpretation. During the audio recording, you may decline to be recorded and have the recorder turned off at any time during the interview. Digital audio recordings (i.e., files) will be stored on the laptop (password protected) of the principal investigator. De-identified records in the form of transcriptions (i.e., files) will be maintained on the laptop (password protected) of the principal investigator for the period through which findings from the study will be disseminated. After this period digital audio files and transcription files will be destroyed.

Confidentiality of Data

Any information that is obtained in connection with this study and that can be identified with you will remain confidential and will be disclosed only with your permission or as required by law. Names will not be used in the reporting of findings. Every effort will be taken to ensure your confidentiality as a participant in this study. If you consent to participate, you will be assigned a random, one-digit number to protect you. No identifying information will be used, and your institution and/or program will not be identified by name in any published report.

Uses of Data

The information that you provide in this study may be used in institutional reports, instructional material, and/or scholarly presentations and publications. Any information that you provide in connection with this study will not be associated with your name or your personally identifying characteristics. That is, any direct quotations of what you say in connection with this study will be used in published or publically available documents in a way that cannot be associated with you.

Participation, Withdrawal, and Review

Your participation in this study is voluntary. You are not obligated whatsoever to answer or respond to any question or to discuss anything that you are not inclined to answer or discuss. You can skip any question, or any part of any question that you are uncomfortable answering.

You may ask that the audiotape be stopped at any time and/or may leave the interview at any time for any reason without consequences of any kind. Once your participation in interviews has concluded, you will have a period of 30 days (from the date of the final interview) to review digital audio files and/or transcriptions (whichever are available) from your interviews and/or withdrawal consent and participation in this study. If you withdrawal consent after participation in the interviews has concluded, digital audio files and/or transcription files (whichever are available) from your interviews will be immediately destroyed.

Identification of Investigators

If you have any questions, concerns, or comments about this research and your participation in this study, you may contact the following: Principal Investigator: Hawa Ghaus-Kelley via email at hawaghauskelley@yahoo.com or by telephone at (661) 71407529.

In addition, you may contact the following: Dr. Nathan R. Durdella, Associate Professor via email at nathan.durdella@csun.edu or office telephone at (818) 677-3316.

Rights of Research Participants

You may withdraw consent at any time and discontinue participation without penalty. You can halt your participation in the study at any time. If you have questions regarding your rights as a research participant, the details of this study, or any other concerns please contact the Office of Research and Sponsored Projects, California State University, Northridge, 265 University Hall, 18111 Nordhoff Street, Northridge, CA 91330, 818-677-2901.

Affirmation by Signature of Research Participant

I have read and understand the procedures described in this “Consent to Participate in Research.” My questions have all been answered to my satisfaction, and I agree to participate in this study. I have been given a copy of this form.

Name of Participant

Signature of Participant Date

Affirmation by Signature of Investigator or Designee

In my judgment the research participant is voluntarily and knowingly giving informed consent and possesses the legal capacity to give informed consent to participate in this research study.

Name of Investigator or Designee

Signature of Investigator or Designee Date

Appendix C: Interview Protocol

CALIFORNIA STATE UNIVERSITY, NORTHRIDGE
MICHAEL D. EISNER COLLEGE OF EDUCATION
DOCTORAL PROGRAM (ED.D.): EDUCATIONAL LEADERSHIP
Exploring the Critical Learning Moments of Women Community College
Executives: A Phenomenological Study of Transformative Educational Leadership
Practices

INTERVIEW PROTOCOL First Interview

I. Pre-interview Session: Introduction/Background

Welcome and introduction:

Good morning/afternoon/evening. Thank you for taking the time to talk with me today. Before we begin the interview session, I'd like to give you the opportunity to read and sign the Consent to Participate in Research.

Purpose of the first interview:

As we discussed, this interview is part the first of two interviews intended to collect information for a research study that examines the meaning of experiences for women executive leaders at California community colleges in order to better understand the meaning and essence of critical learning moments in their leadership practice. During this first interview, I will attempt to put your overall experience in content by asking you to tell me as much as possible about yourself in light of this topic of female leadership up to this present moment in time. I will ask you to explore your lived experiences, talk about your personal and family background, former leadership experiences, and attitudes about leadership up until the time you became an executive leader, going as far back as possible within our 60 minutes.

Confidentiality:

Any information you share with us today will be used for research purposes only. I will be aggregating results from all interviews and will not be attributing comments to any particular person. You will not be identified by name, department or office, position, or any other personally identifying information in any report or document. Today's interview session will be audio-recorded. I will also be taking notes of the conversation. The audio recordings may be transcribed for analysis. The audio recorded file, transcribed file, and notes will be stored securely in a password-protected laptop of the evaluator until completion of interview analysis. Upon completion of analysis, files and notes will be destroyed. Only the researchers identified in the Consent to Participate will have access to the files and notes. The files and notes will be accessed and analyzed in strict confidentiality. Finally your name or personally identifying information will not be used in any published or public reports.

Informed consent:

This consent notice summarizes some information from the Consent to Participate in Research and communicates the procedures, potential risks and discomforts for subjects, potential benefits to subjects, payment to subjects for participation, participation and withdrawal, and rights of research subjects. Procedures in this interview are limited to two semi-structured personal interview sessions. Because the study deals with issues that are sensitive, some interview questions may involve issues of a personal nature. You may feel uneasy about answering some of these interview questions. You may elect not to answer any of the questions with which you feel uneasy and still remain as a participant in the study. You may not benefit personally from your participation in this study. However, findings from this study may lead to improvements in reform initiatives and may contribute to our knowledge on the subject. Your participation in this interview is voluntary. You are not obligated whatsoever to answer or respond to any question or to discuss anything that you are not inclined to answer or discuss. You can skip any question, or any part of any question, and will not face any penalty for answering, or not answering, any question in any way. You may ask that the audio recording be stopped at any time and/or may leave the interview at any time for any reason without consequences of any kind. You may withdraw consent at any time and discontinue participation without interview. You can halt your participation in the interview at any time. You are not waiving legal claims, rights, or remedies because of your participation in this interview.

Identification and contact information of principal investigator:

If you have questions regarding your rights as a research subject, the details of this study, or any other concerns please contact:

The Principal Investigator: Hawa Ghaus-Kelley, via telephone at 661-714-7529 or via email at hawaghauskelley@yahoo.com.

Dr. Nathan Durdella, Faculty Advisor, Department of Educational Leadership and Policy Studies, California State University, Northridge, via telephone at 818-677-3316 or via email at nathan.durdella@csun.edu.

Timing:

Today's interview will last approximately 60 minutes. Are there any questions before I get started?

II. Interview Session

Main Questions

Context: These questions are in reference to the periods before and up until your current executive leadership position:

1. Please describe your professional and/or academic life before and up to your current leadership position.
2. During your undergraduate and/or graduate studies, can you tell me who played a significant role in influencing your decision to become a leader?

3. What early career or life experiences helped you decide to become an educational leader?
4. Have you had any experiences of being mentored or trained by other women leaders before and up to your current leadership position?
5. How would you describe your past leadership experiences? More specifically, how would you describe your past experiences in seeking opportunities to lead as a female?
6. What about your gender identity - has being a woman leader affected your interaction with stakeholders such as board of trustees, staff, faculty and community at large in your former positions?
7. What obstacles do you recall impeding your leadership in changing the status quo or initiating a reform in a college or organization?
8. How would you describe your *leadership style*? Have there been any unique *issues for you* to overcome and unique issues that affected your leadership style during your past leadership experiences?

Closing Questions

I would like to give you a final opportunity to help me examine these issues. Before I end today, is there anything that I missed? Do you have anything else to add at this time? Have you said everything that you wanted to say but didn't get a chance to say? Have you shared everything that is significant about these interactions with me? If there's anything else that you recall after our interview session, I invite you to share it by contacting me.

III. Post-Interview Session: Debriefing and Closing

Thank you for participating in today's interview session. I appreciate your taking the time and sharing your ideas with me. I also want to restate that what you have shared with me is confidential. No part of our discussion that includes names or other identifying information will be used in any report or document. Finally, I want to provide you with a chance to ask any questions that you might have about this interview. Do you have any questions at this time? As you know, this is the first of three interview sessions. Before we end the session today, I'd like to take a moment to schedule the second interview (if we have not yet done so). May we do so now?

Appendix D: Interview Protocol

CALIFORNIA STATE UNIVERSITY, NORTHRIDGE
MICHAEL D. EISNER COLLEGE OF EDUCATION
DOCTORAL PROGRAM (ED.D.): EDUCATIONAL LEADERSHIP
Exploring the Critical Learning Moments of Community College Women
Executives: A Phenomenological Study of Transformative Educational Leadership
Practices

INTERVIEW PROTOCOL Second Interview

I. Pre-interview Session: Introduction/Background

Welcome and introduction:

Good morning/afternoon/evening. Thank you for taking the time to talk with me today. Before we begin the interview session, I'd like to give you the opportunity to read and sign the Consent to Participate in Research.

Purpose of the second interview:

As we discussed, this interview is part of two interviews intended to collect information for a research study that examines the meaning of experiences of women executive leaders at California community colleges in order to better understand the meaning and essence of critical learning moments in their leadership practice. During this second interview, I will concentrate on obtaining concrete details of your present lived experience as a woman executive leader of a two-year institution by asking you to reconstruct details of your current leadership experience to share any critical learning moment (s) in your leadership practice for organizational change and systemic reform. I will ask you to reflect on the meaning of your experiences in light of what you said about your life before you became an executive leader and given what you have said about your work now. Within 60 to 90 minutes, I would like to understand your overall leadership practice, what transformative leadership practices you have utilized to lead your campus to systemic reform, and how do you support other females toward educational and leadership advancement in your college. In addition, I will also like for you to reflect on where you see yourself and the field of leadership, and how you perceive women's executive leadership heading in the future in relation to the field of leadership practice, upward mobility, and in leading organizational change and reform efforts in the community college system of higher education..

Confidentiality:

Any information you share with us today will be used for research purposes only. I will be aggregating results from all interviews and will not be attributing comments to any particular person. You will not be identified by name, department or office, position, or any other personally identifying information in any report or document. Today's interview session will be audio-recorded. I will also be taking notes of the conversation. The audio recordings may be transcribed for analysis. The audio recorded file, transcribed file, and notes will be stored securely in a password-protected laptop of the evaluator until completion of interview analysis. Upon completion of analysis, files and notes will be destroyed. Only the researchers identified in

the Consent to Participate will have access to the files and notes. The files and notes will be accessed and analyzed in strict confidentiality. Finally your name or personally identifying information will not be used in any published or public reports.

Informed consent:

This consent notice summarizes some information from the Consent to Participate in Research and communicates the procedures, potential risks and discomforts for subjects, potential benefits to subjects, payment to subjects for participation, participation and withdrawal, and rights of research subjects. Procedures in this interview are limited to two semi-structured personal interview sessions. Because the study deals with issues that are sensitive, some interview questions may involve issues of a personal nature. You may feel uneasy about answering some of these interview questions. You may elect not to answer any of the questions with which you feel uneasy and still remain as a participant in the study. You may not benefit personally from your participation in this study. However, findings from this study may lead to improvements in reform initiatives and may contribute to our knowledge on the subject. Your participation in this interview is voluntary. You are not obligated whatsoever to answer or respond to any question or to discuss anything that you are not inclined to answer or discuss. You can skip any question, or any part of any question, and will not face any penalty for answering, or not answering, any question in any way. You may ask that the audio recording be stopped at any time and/or may leave the interview at any time for any reason without consequences of any kind. You may withdraw consent at any time and discontinue participation without interview. You can halt your participation in the interview at any time. You are not waiving legal claims, rights, or remedies because of your participation in this interview.

Identification and contact information of principal investigator:

The Principal Investigator: Hawa Ghaus-Kelley, via telephone at 661-714-7529 or via email at hawaghauskelley@yahoo.com.

Dr. Nathan Durdella, Faculty Advisor, Department of Educational Leadership and Policy Studies, California State University, Northridge, via telephone at 818-677-3316 or via email at nathan.durdella@csun.edu.

Timing:

Today's interview will last approximately 60-90 minutes. Are there any questions before I get started?

II. Interview Session

Main Questions

Context: These questions are in reference to your current life experiences in your current position as a woman executive leader of this institution.

1. Please describe your present experiences associated with leadership as a woman who is an executive leader of this institution?

2. How would you describe your *leadership style*? Can you tell me a story about a particular experience associated with your style of leadership as a woman executive leader?
3. As an executive leader of this college, how do you describe your experiences in affecting personal or professional relationships presently?
4. What about your gender - how does this interact with your relationships with stakeholders such as board of trustees, staff, faculty, and community at large, given your current leadership position?
5. Can you tell me a story of what *leadership practices* you used in leading and instituting *change processes* in your college toward systemic reform during:
 - a) The 2008 - 2012 economic crisis when external pressures and critical events faced your college
 - b) 2012-2013 economic recovery and current times of relative stability
 - c) Present times of relative growth and stability – what are you currently planning to initiate for innovation?
6. Have any obstacle(s) impeded your leadership in changing the status quo when instituting a reform initiative or in the process of transforming this college overall?
7. How do you assess your college's cultural pulse before implementing any change processes?
 - a) Can you give me an example of how your leadership style changed as you adapted to the college's culture?
 - b) Can you give me an example of how your leadership style changed the college's culture?
8. Explain how you involve other stakeholders in the change implementation and management processes in your college?
9. Do you believe it is important to support and mentor other females toward leadership advancement?
 - a) Are you doing anything specific to mentor new women leaders in your college?
 - b) Can you give me an example or story of how or in what ways you support other females toward educational or leadership advancement in you college?
10. Have you addressed any structural issues facing women leaders in hiring practices or in advancing in the leadership pipeline of your college presently?
11. What significant moments, or “ah-ha” moments have you experienced in your overall leadership practice thus far?

- a) How do you understand these experiences?
- b) What do these stories you have constructed about your life mean to you?
- c) How do you presently understand leadership in your life?

- 12.** Please reflect on the meaning of your experiences in light of what you said about your life in our first interview and before you became an executive leader, and given what you have said today about your work now. How do you understand your overall leadership practice as an individual, as a leader, and as a female executive?
- 13.** Where do you see the field of leadership in community colleges, in particular, woman executive leadership in the future, given how factors in your own life interacted to bring you to your present situation and within the context in which it occurred?
- 14.** Do you feel that the articulation of your stories empower you and your leadership practice? If so, please describe how.

Closing Questions

I would like to give you a final opportunity to help me examine these issues. Before I end today, is there anything that I missed? Do you have anything else to add at this time? Have you said everything that you wanted to say but didn't get a chance to say? Have you shared everything that is significant about these interactions with me? If there's anything else that you recall after our interview session, I invite you to share it by contacting me.

III. Post-Interview Session: Debriefing and Closing

Thank you for participating in today's interview session. I appreciate your taking the time and sharing your ideas with me. I also want to restate that what you have shared with me is confidential. No part of our discussion that includes names or other identifying information will be used in any report or document. Finally, I want to provide you with a chance to ask any questions that you might have about this interview. Do you have any questions at this time? As you know, this is the second of three interview sessions. Before we end the session today, I'd like to take a moment to schedule the second interview (if we have not yet done so). May we do so?