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Community College Presidents and the Role of Conversational Leadership

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Community College Presidents and the Role of Conversational Leadership

A Dissertation by

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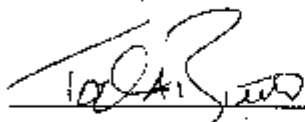
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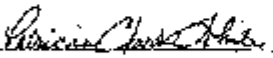
Doctor of Education in Organizational Leadership

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This dissertation is dedicated to the three generations of strong, sensitive, intelligent, socially aware women who shared in the responsibility of raising me: my mom, my grandmother, and my great grandmother. My great grandmother, Louise, shattered the female stereotypes of her generation by leaving an abusive man, working, and raising two children on her own. She taught me strength and fortitude. My grandmother, Ellie, was like a second mother to me and assisted my mother in raising me. Ellie was a civil rights activist and a feminist. She taught me to stand up and speak up for human rights; she taught me that I could be and do anything, and she taught me about unconditional love and the power in kindness. My mom, Karen, was only a girl of 16 when I came into the world. Until she met Ed, who would later become my father, she raised me by herself. Even as a teenager, my mother knew to surround me with people who could teach me things and expose me to experiences where she was unable. She believed in education more than any other person in my life did. She consistently encouraged me to pursue a higher education. Though I began my educational pursuits later than most, it was always her voice telling me to stay the course. My great grandmother and my grandmother are not physically here to share in this moment, but I know their spirits are delighted in my accomplishment. My mother is physically here, but Alzheimer's has robbed her of some realities. Still, I know how proud and excited she is that her baby girl went "all the way" in accomplishing her educational goals. I have earned this degree on the back of three wonderful women who were not as fortunate in attaining their own educational pursuits.

I also dedicate this dissertation to my father, Ed. My dad came into my life when I was four years old, and I knew the moment I met him that he would always be one of my best friends, greatest supporters, and strongest allies. He brought stability, consistency, reason, laughter, kindness, joy, adventure, and love into the lives of a young single mother and her daughter. He is exactly what a dad should be and has believed in me and guided me to become the woman I am.

I dedicate this dissertation and degree to my four amazing children: Kayla, Dylan, Colby, and Blayk. They are the motivation that finally nudged me into pursuing my education when I became a 32-year-old single mom of four young children. Twenty years later, they are still my inspiration as I complete my final educational goal, the doctoral degree. I cannot adequately express how grateful I am to be the mother of these four wonderfully kind, intelligent, creative, socially aware, politically intelligent beings. They are my everyday teachers. They are my heart and soul.

I also want to dedicate this dissertation to all my friends, family, colleagues, and staff who have supported me, loved me, and guided me. To my ex-husband, Mike, and his girlfriend, Kelly, I thank you for your love and support. To Joy, thank you for taking care of my parents and for being the best ex-mother-in-law ever. To all my friends who patiently waited for me to be available again after the completion of this degree. To my best friend, Tracy, who has provided me over thirty years of friendship based on collaboration, kindness, respect, love, laughter, and mutual support. You are my biggest cheerleader, and your belief in me has never wavered. Thank you for the gift of true friendship.

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ABSTRACT

Community College Presidents and the Role of Conversational Leadership

by Jennifer Kay LaBounty

Purpose: The purpose of this phenomenological research study was to describe the behaviors that exemplary community college presidents practice to lead their organizations through conversation as depicted by Groysberg and Slind's (2012) four elements of conversational leadership: intimacy, interactivity, inclusion, and intentionality.

Methodology: This qualitative, phenomenological study described the lived experiences of exemplary community college presidents as they lead their organizations through the use of conversational leadership. The sample population for this study was community college presidents who met the criteria of exemplary from single-college districts in Southern California. Data were gathered and triangulated from semistructured, in-depth interviews, participant observations, and the collection of artifacts. Interview questions and protocols were established by a thematic dissertation team of peers and faculty experts. Data analysis was performed using NVivo software.

Findings: Thirty themes and 549 frequencies emerged from the data across the four elements of conversational leadership: intimacy, interactivity, inclusion, and intentionality. Seventeen key findings resulted from the data relating to the lived experiences of exemplary community college presidents and their use of conversational leadership to lead their organizations.

Conclusions: Examination of the key findings resulted in 8 conclusions demonstrating the conversational leadership behaviors of the participants of this study. The top 4

conclusions revealed that community college presidents (a) who want to build intimate relationships with their constituents need to share stories to build trust and reveal commonalities; (b) who want to build strong, intimate relationships with their constituents need to commit to being genuine, authentic, and transparent in their conversations; (c) who want to increase trust and intimacy within the organization must actively listen to the members of their organization; and (d) who want to create an interactive organization must consistently encourage open dialogue across the organization and use their imbedded institutional processes to encourage further collaboration and dialogue among members.

Recommendations: The study of conversational leadership practices across populations is in its infancy, and there are recommendations to conduct further research to broaden the scope and add to the body of literature available.

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PREFACE

Following discussions and considerations regarding the opportunity to study Groysberg and Slind's (2012) conversational leadership in multiple types of organizations, four faculty researchers and 12 doctoral students discovered a common interest in exploring the ways exemplary leaders practice conversational leadership using the four elements of intimacy, interactivity, inclusion, and intentionality. This resulted in a thematic study conducted by a research team of 12 doctoral students.

This phenomenological research was designed with a focus on the behaviors of top executives in elementary education as they practice and lead their organizations through conversation. Exemplary leaders were selected by the team from various public, for-profit, and nonprofit organizations to examine the behaviors these professionals used. Each researcher interviewed 10 highly successful professionals to describe how they led their organizations through conversation using each of the four elements outlined in *Talk, Inc.* by authors Groysberg and Slind (2012). To ensure thematic consistency, the team cocreated the purpose statement, research questions, definitions, interview questions, and study procedures. The team agreed that for the purpose of increased validity, data collection would involve method triangulation and would include interviews, observations, and artifacts.

Throughout the study, the term *peer researcher* is used to refer to the other researchers who conducted this thematic study. The researcher and her fellow doctoral students and peer researchers studied exemplary leaders in the following fields: Nikki Salas, city managers; Jacqueline Cardenas, unified school district superintendents; Chris Powell, elementary principals; Kristin Brogan-Baranski, elementary superintendents;

Lisa Paisley, educational services assistant superintendents; Robert Harris, high school principals; John Ashby, middle school principals; Tammie Castillo Shiffer, regional directors of migrant education; Cladonda Lamela, chief nursing officers; Vincent Plair, municipal police chiefs and sheriffs; Qiana O'Leary, nonprofit executive directors; and this researcher, community college presidents.

CHAPTER I: INTRODUCTION

The world has changed dramatically over the last century, and with the advancements in technology, our communication practices are continually evolving. In fact, communication technology has become part of society's everyday functioning including e-mails, texts, social media, webcasts, tweets, and skyping as ways in which people can communicate with greater speed and across most distances. The changes in communication practices have had both positive and negative impacts, especially in the workforce. It was determined in a study conducted by De Wet, Koekemoer, and Nel (2016) that as the quantity and speed of employee communication has increased, the quality of conversations have decreased. Furthermore, as the quality of conversations in the workforce has decreased, so have the levels of employee engagement and satisfaction. Recent surveys have demonstrated that only 29% of employees identify as engaged in their work (Crowley, 2011; Mautz, 2015). This is a serious problem since engaged employees are more satisfied with their work environment and therefore more efficient and productive for their organizations. For example, 72% of highly engaged workers also believe that they can positively affect their work environment and are far less likely to leave for another job (Crowley, 2011).

Mayfield and Mayfield (2002) explained, "Communication practices have been shown to be a critical factor in superior worker motivation and performance" (p. 89). With the quality of conversation and engagement in the workplace on the decline, the responsibility falls to leaders of the organization to develop and apply superior communication strategies with their employees (Bowman, 2014; Hurley & Brown, 2010; Kegan & Lahey, 2001).

Employee engagement is a determiner of an organization's success, so when research suggests that employee engagement and satisfaction scores have fallen to crisis levels and there is a demand for a change in leadership practices to meet those needs, this instills a sense of urgency (D. Anderson & Ackerman-Anderson, 2010; Crowley, 2011; Mautz, 2015). Leadership behaviors and practices play a significant role in guiding and motivating employees (D. Anderson, 2015). Many researchers indicate that successful organizations often have leaders who have forged solid and meaningful relationships with their employees by using conversation as a way to develop and strengthen those relationships (Boekhorst, 2015; Bowman, 2014; Chapman, 2013; Glaser, 2014; Groysberg & Slind, 2012; Mazutis & Slawinski, 2007; Weber, 2013). Conversation can be used intentionally by leaders to build interactive trusting relationships through intimate and inclusive dialogue. This transcends to employees developing a sense of purpose within the organization, which leads to higher levels of engagement.

As our world evolves and our communication practices change, it is important to learn more about leaders who are adept at managing these changes by using communication strategies intent on increasing employee satisfaction and engagement within the organization (Berson, & Stieglitz, 2013; Glaser, 2014; Groysberg & Slind, 2012; Weber, 2013).

Background: Our Changing World

Advancements in technology have changed our world immensely over the last century (Durden & Hedge, 2013). In addition to dramatic changes in the way people communicate, technology has also led to a significant increase in lifespan and population growth. As a result of people living longer, they stay employed in the workforce longer,

creating an avenue for multiple generations to be employed simultaneously. The

intergenerational workforce brings with it varied perceptions, skill sets, and behaviors,

which have led to a change in workplace expectations. Employees want to derive value

from what they do and how they do it (D. Anderson, 2015; Crowley, 2011; Friedman &

Mandelbaum, 2012; Groysberg & Slind, 2012; Mautz, 2015). Unfortunately, resources

have identified that 71% of Americans are not engaged in their work, leading to a lack of

productivity and efficiency (Mautz, 2015). Since the engagement of our workforce

affects organization development and success, leaders must find strategies to increase

employee engagement, productivity, and efficiency to provide for a healthy economy.

Many researchers have identified the use of conversation as a tool for leaders to

develop meaningful relationships with their employees and increase employee

engagement and productivity (Boekhorst, 2015; Bowman, 2014; Chapman, 2013; Glaser,

2014; Groysberg & Slind, 2012; Mazutis & Slawinski, 2007; Weber, 2013). As a result,

Groysberg and Slind (2012) developed "conversational leadership" and its elements to

demonstrate how leaders use conversation to transform their organizations.

Theoretical Background

Conversational leadership has origins in a variety of well-established theories.

For example, leadership theory, communication theory, and social construction theory

have all influenced the development of conversational leadership and its elements.

Leadership Theory

Many experts agree that leadership is a primary facet of initiating and driving

change within an organization (D. Anderson, 2015; Van Der Voet, Groeneveld, &

Kuipers, 2014). As a result, since the mid-1800s, researchers have tried to identify the

elements of leadership as well as the characteristics that create great leaders. These elements and characteristics have changed and evolved over time, which can be demonstrated in a variety of leadership theories, such as the great man theory, trait theory, behavioral theory, transactional/management theory, and relationship/transformational theory.

Great man theory. The great man theory was proposed by a Scottish writer, Thomas Carlyle, in 1840. This leadership theory hypothesizes that leadership is an inherent quality that will surface when a man is confronted with an appropriate situation (Amanchukwu, Stanley, & Ololube, 2015). It also postulates that only men are capable of becoming leaders, which provides clarity to the naming of the theory.

Trait theory. Trait theory gained popularity in the 1930s and 1940s as a result of American psychologist, Gordon Allport's work. Allport believed that leadership was an inherent quality, much like the great man theory, and based on personality traits. He and his colleagues identified 18,000 English personality-relevant terms to distinguish the leadership capabilities of men though none of these were validated with scientific measure (Matthews, Deary, & Whiteman, 2003).

Behavioral theory. With the rise of behaviorism models in the study of psychology in the mid-1900s, this also became a model for leadership theory. The behavioral theory of leadership is based on the concept that great leaders are made, not born. This concept was in stark contrast to both leadership theories preceding this one. This leadership theory claims that people can learn to become leaders by observation and training (Amanchukwu et al., 2015).

Contingency theory. Contingency theories of leadership came into prominence in the late 1950s and stayed at the forefront of leadership theory through the end of 1970. This theory still has roots in behaviorism but claims that there is no specific leadership style that would be appropriate across all situations, meaning it is contingent on a variety of variables (Charry, 2012). Therefore, the success of leadership depends on many environmental variables, such as the situation itself, the location, the characteristics of the leader and of the followers as well as other factors.

Transactional/management theory. In 1985, researcher Bernard Bass expanded on a leadership theory first proposed by Max Weber in 1947, which was described as management theory, also known as transactional theory. This theory is focused on the role of supervision and employee compliance. Management or transactional theories base leadership on a system of rewards and punishments (Charry, 2012). When an organization is successful, it is on the premise that employees are rewarded when they perform well and reprimanded or punished when they perform poorly (Hater & Bass, 1988).

Relationship/transformational theory. Relationship theories, which are also known as transformational theories, base leadership on the connections established between leaders and their followers. James V. Downton was the first to coin the term "transformational leadership" though leadership expert, James MacGregor Burns, expanded on the concept in 1978. According to Burns (2003), transformational leadership can be seen when leaders and followers inspire one another to reach higher levels of morality and motivation. Although the supervisor is expected to motivate, influence, and develop meaningful connections with subordinates, there is an idea that

both leader and follower share in the development, decision making, and success of the organization. These leaders are focused on the performance of the group, but they also attend to each person, inspiring each to fulfill his or her potential. Leaders of this style often intentionally collaborate with their employees, which parallels to Groysberg and Slind's (2012) use of conversational leadership to be intimate, interactive, inclusive, and intentional.

Leadership Styles

The leadership theories have resulted in the identification of leadership styles and those have also evolved over time. For example, the terms that define leadership style have grown from autocratic, bureaucratic, emergent, situational, strategic, transactional, and servant, to the current terms of facilitative, authentic, and transformational (Amanchukwu et al., 2015). Associated with these terms are behaviors and practices that leaders employ, resulting in the outcomes of the organizations in which they lead. Using the principles outlined in Groysberg and Slind's (2012) construction of conversational leadership, conversation can be used as a tool to be facilitative, authentic, and transformational through intimacy, interactivity, inclusion, and intentionality.

Communication Theory

Communication as a study is a modern discipline, but it has a long history and deep roots in philosophy (Cobley & Schulz, 2013). As a result, there have been numerous philosophers, scientists, psychologists, sociologists, and linguists that have postulated and hypothesized about communication practices. Many theories on communication began appearing in the United States following World War II. However, much of it focused on how information was transported from one point to another and the

speed in which transmission transpired, rather than the content of the communication. Cobley and Schulz (2013) noted two books that came out in this regard: Shannon and Weaver's, *The Mathematical Theory of Communication* (in 1949) and Wiener's *Cybernetics* (in 1948).

It was not long after, that other researchers such as Hovland and Schramm (in 1962) began looking into various types of communication and the significance of its content, combining pieces of information theory with social psychology (Cobley & Schulz, 2013). In addition, communication theory evolved again in 1969 when Karl Weick proposed that communication was at the core of group learning and the achievement of organizational goals developed out of interaction among organization members. Eadie and Goret (2013) stated, "Weick called the process 'sensemaking,' and he proposed that organizations were loosely-coupled systems where collective meanings of messages and actions evolved over time" (p. 26). Weick's contribution to communication theory, specifically the idea that communication practices in the workplace lead to employees learning and making sense of their organization, correlates well to elements outlined in Groysberg and Slind's (2012) development of conversational leadership.

Social Construction Theory

Social construction theory became prominent after the release of Berger and Luckmann's (1966) book, *The Social Construction of Reality*. Berger and Luckmann proposed that all knowledge is derived from and maintained by social interactions. In addition, Berger and Luckmann suggested that language used in social groups provides meaning to objects, situations, and interactions, and that meaning constructs our reality.

When social construction theory is applied to the workplace, it becomes evident that employees construct their workplace realities from the conversations and interactions they share with others in their organization.

Conversational Leadership

Conversational leadership is a progression of ideas postulated in leadership theories, communication theories, and social construction theories, as demonstrated in the above literature. It is clear that leadership is an essential aspect of driving change within an organization, but how one leads determines the outcome. Currently, there is a strong belief that "leadership communication has shown to be a critical factor in superior worker motivation and performance and has great potential to aid organizations in their quest for committed employees" (Mayfield & Mayfield, 2002). Accordingly, much of the literature points to the importance of leaders developing conversational strategies so that there is direction and guidance in the acquisition of superior conversation skills (Berson & Stieglitz, 2013; Glaser, 2014; Weber, 2013). Consequently, this literature review examines a model created by Groysberg and Slind (2012) in which they identified four elements of conversational leadership: intimacy, interactivity, inclusion, and intentionality.

The Four Elements of Conversational Leadership

Groysberg and Slind (2012) developed a model of conversational leadership that includes four elements of conversation that exemplary leaders use within their organizations. These four elements included intimacy, interactivity, inclusion, and intentionality, all of which promote relationship building, trust, exchange of information, sharing of ideas, engagement, ownership, and purpose.

Element One: Intimacy

The first element Groysberg and Slind (2012) identified is intimacy and has to do with developing a relationship and forging a bond through conversation. Conversational intimacy was described by the authors as "a mode of human relations in which those with decision-making authority seek and earn the trust of those who work under that authority" (Groysberg & Slind, 2012, p. 13). They also proposed that this is a way for supervisors or leaders in an organization to grow close to their employees by shrinking the gap between them that inherently exists. The goal for leaders in the pursuit of intimacy is to step down from the corporate perch and share a bit of themselves as they speak with employees in a personal, authentic, and a transparent way. Intimacy is the foundation to build trust, and trust is an imperative element to an organization's success and sustainability (Groysberg & Slind, 2012; Mayfield & Mayfield, 2002; Sinek, 2009).

Element Two: Interactivity

The second of the four elements identified by Groysberg and Slind (2012) is interactivity where the focus is based on promoting a dialogue between two or more people. This is the concept that leaders must talk with employees and not just talk at or to them. If only one person monopolizes the conversation, then it is not a conversation. As a result, leaders who practice interactivity promote the back and forth that takes place in a conversation. Zimmerman (1991) explained that conversation is the interplay between participants and the relationship that grows through the back-and-forth dialogue, influencing the flow and direction of the conversation. Therefore, interactivity is a powerful way to understand the thoughts and perceptions of the employees within an

organization, which builds on the closeness but also creates a pathway for learning,

sharing, and creating new ideas that arise from the back-and-forth dialogue.

Element Three: Inclusion

The third of the four elements is recognized by Groysberg and Slind (2012) as

inclusion, where the focus is on the expansion of employees' roles in regard to the

substance and ownership of the conversation. This process of inclusion demonstrates that

the leader values the employees of the organization and believes their contributions carry

just as much weight as any others. Therefore, when employees feel valued by their

organization's leadership and believe that their thoughts and ideas are appreciated, they

are more likely to contribute content that they are proud of and will take ownership over.

Berson and Stieglitz (2013) further postulated that inclusion ensures diverse and

multifaceted thoughts, ideas, and points of view, which tends to strengthen the creativity

and decision making within the organization. Furthermore, inclusion builds upon

intimacy and interactivity, making each element stronger when the others are also

present.

Element Four: Intentionality

The final element included in the four elements of conversational leadership by

Groysberg and Slind (2012) is intentionality. The focus of intentionality is being

purposeful by having a sense of the direction and goals of the conversation. As a result,

intentionality is still open and honest, but it is not aimless; there is always the pursuit of

an agenda. If the conversation has intentionality, it will begin to take shape and will be

more focused on moving toward a specific direction or goal. The purpose of

intentionality is to cultivate dialogue within an organization to improve its efficiency and

productivity. Scott (2004) used the old adage, "The only way out is though," to explain

that the best outcomes are achieved through the leader's ability to be strategic in

preparation for a thoughtful and meaningful conversation with organizational members.

Community College Presidents

There are 114 community colleges in California within 72 districts (California

Community Colleges Chancellor's Office [CCCCO], n.d.). Each community college has

a president who acts as the chief executive administrative officer for the college. The

president is responsible for the organization and administration of the college. There is a

basic assumption that the role the president plays is critical in maintaining the viability of

the institution (D'Aloia, 1984).

President's Role in Leadership

Community college presidents often set the tone for their campus constituents:

administration, faculty, classified staff, community partners, and students. It is important

that the president be adept at communicating and authentic as a leader (McMurray,

2010). The American Association of Community Colleges (AACC) developed six

competencies for effective leadership by a community college president: organizational

strategy, resource management, communication, collaboration, advocacy,

professionalism (McNair, 2015). Other valuable leadership characteristics include

honesty, truthfulness, forthrightness, and trustworthiness as vital for effective leaders of

academic institutions (McMurray, 2010).

Gaps in the Literature

Although there are numerous studies in relation to leadership as a whole, a gap

remains in the specific study of leadership styles and characteristics of community

college presidents. In addition, the literature has identified that conversations are an important aspect of leadership but has not delineated the specific elements of conversation that are necessary (Bowman, 2014; Chapman, 2013; Di Virgilio & Ludema, 2009; Hurley & Brown, 2010; Mazutis & Slawinski, 2007; Nichols, 2012; Seyranian, 2014). However, Groysberg and Slind (2012) developed four elements of conversation, yet no studies exist that examine exemplary community college presidents and their use of these elements, which were the focus of this study.

Statement of the Research Problem

Today's business world is being shaped by rapidly changing technology and is more dependent than ever on greater employee collaboration, institutional knowledge, creative thinking, and employee engagement (Berson & Stieglitz, 2013; Crowley, 2011; Durden & Hedge, 2013; Groysberg & Slind, 2012. However, a recent Gallup poll identified that employee engagement is at crisis levels with a staggering 71% of Americans not being engaged in their work (Crowley, 2011; Mautz, 2015). When employees are not engaged, they retreat from collaboration efforts, the sharing of knowledge, and creative thinking. These behaviors lead to a decline in productivity and efficiency, which has a negative effect on the success of an organization (Crowley, 2011; Friedman & Mandelbaum, 2012; Mautz, 2015). Since the business world and economy ultimately depend on employee engagement, there is an urgency in finding ways to increase these engagement levels, but how?

Many experts are in agreement that superior leadership is necessary to initiating and driving change within an organization (D. Anderson, 2015; Van Der Voet et al., 2014). However, it is the type of leadership and the strategies employed by leaders that

will dictate the course of change and success within the organization. For example, transformational leadership requires that the leader have a broader and deeper knowledge of the people and process dynamics necessary for change (Ackerman-Anderson & Anderson, 2010; Burns, 2003; Kouzes & Posner, 2006).

Organizational communication research adds that it is through communication practices that leaders drive change within an organization (Barge, Downs, & Johnson, 1989; Di Virgilio & Ludema, 2009). Berson and Stieglitz (2013) stated that great leaders build a dynamic, inclusive environment by communicating effectively, while Law (2009) postulated that continuous technological change is inevitably leading to organizational change and leaders can only be successful managing and driving that change if they use communication to create a culture of trust, loyalty, motivation to learn, enthusiasm, and productivity.

Numerous researchers identified the use of conversation as a communication tool for leaders to develop meaningful relationships with their employees and increase employee engagement and productivity (Boekhorst, 2015; Bowman, 2014; Chapman, 2013; Glaser, 2014; Groysberg & Slind, 2012; Mazutis & Slawinski, 2007; Weber, 2013). While conversation has been identified by experts as a way for leaders to increase employee engagement (Berson & Stieglitz, 2013; Chapman, 2013; Glaser, 2014; Groysberg & Slind, 2012; Hurley & Brown, 2010; Kegan & Lahey, 2001; Mayfield & Mayfield, 2002; Mazutis & Slawinski, 2007; Weber, 2013), very little research has been done to study the detailed elements of a conversation that exemplary leaders use to transform their organization (Barge et al., 1989; Di Virgilio & Ludema, 2009; Hurley & Brown, 2010; Mazutis & Slawinski, 2007; Seyranian, 2014). More information is needed

on how successful leaders use specific conversational elements to achieve employee engagement and productivity.

Of specific interest to the researcher is the role of the community college president in using these tools (McMurray, 2010; McNair, 2015). Bowman (2014) described the impact that can occur in colleges when conversationally adept leaders consciously design their conversations to set the tone and direction of collegial conversation, which creates a "shift in thinking and action for everyone at the college" (p. 175). Though community college presidents act as the chief executive administrative officer for the college and are responsible for the organization and administration of the college, there is little information available about the way they lead through conversation (Cooney, 2016; McMurray, 2010).

Groysberg and Slind (2012) theorized that "conversational leadership" and its elements (intimacy, interactivity, inclusion, and intentionality) could be an important tool for leaders to transform their organization and increase employee engagement. Since there is a lack of research that currently exists in examining exemplary community college presidents and their use of these specific elements, this is the focus of this study.

Purpose Statement

The purpose of this phenomenological research study was to describe the behaviors that exemplary community college presidents practice to lead their organizations through conversation as depicted by Groysberg and Slind's (2012) four elements of conversational leadership: intimacy, interactivity, inclusion, and intentionality.

<center>**Research Questions**</center>

Central Question

What are the behaviors that exemplary community college presidents practice to lead their organizations through conversation using Groysberg and Slind's four elements of conversational leadership: intimacy, interactivity, inclusion, and intentionality?

Subquestions

1. How do exemplary community college presidents lead their organizations through the conversation element of intimacy?

2. How do exemplary community college presidents lead their organizations through the conversation element of interactivity?

3. How do exemplary community college presidents lead their organizations through the conversation element of inclusion?

4. How do exemplary community college presidents lead their organizations through the conversation element of intentionality?

<center>**Significance of the Study**</center>

The engagement and productivity of our 21st-century workforce is in rapid decline and has reached crisis levels (Crowley, 2011; Friedman & Mandelbaum, 2012; Mautz, 2015). There is an urgent need for leaders to use strategies and tools aimed at increasing the levels of employee engagement and productivity to improve organizational success (D. Anderson & Ackerman-Anderson, 2010). A variety of researchers propose that organizations are established and given meaning through the communication practices that are used (Di Virgilio & Ludema, 2009) and that leaders are responsible for shaping and modeling these practices (D. Anderson, 2015; Boekhorst, 2015; Kouzes &

<center>15</center>

Posner, 2012). Experts have identified conversation as a critical aspect of leadership communication that directly correlates to engagement and productivity levels within an organization (Glaser, 2014; Groysberg & Slind, 2012; Mayfield & Mayfield, 2002; Mazutis & Slawinski, 2007; Weber, 2013).

Therefore, as organizations strive to hire leaders who are adept at using conversation to foster inclusivity, trust, competence, loyalty, and efficiency, understanding the detailed elements of conversation that exemplary leaders use to transform their organization is of utmost importance. Since the study of these specific elements within conversational leadership is still in its infancy, the outcomes of further research can have profound effects on the development of organizational leadership practices (Groysberg & Slind, 2012; Hurley & Brown, 2010; Mayfield & Mayfield, 2002; Van Der Voet et al., 2014; Wolper, 2016).

Leadership has been shown to be the catalyst for initiating and sustaining change within an organization (Ackerman-Anderson & Anderson, 2010; D. Anderson, 2015; Kouzes & Posner, 2012; Van Der Voet et al., 2014). Therefore, conducting research on exemplary leaders who use their conversational capacity and intelligence to lead (Glaser, 2014; Weber, 2013) can provide a pathway to increased engagement and productivity; ultimately leading to organizational success.

As a result, most organizations can potentially benefit from this study as it focuses on the use of conversational leadership elements practiced by exemplary leaders. However, the institution of higher education may reap tremendous benefits from a study such as this one. For instance, community colleges are one of the largest institutions of higher education in the United States. The AACC estimates that 7.3 million

undergraduate students are enrolled in community colleges with the potential of graduating, transferring, and becoming part of the workforce (CCCCO, n.d.). In California alone, there are 114 community colleges (CCCCO, n.d.), each one employing a community college president as the leader who has the capacity to influence the outcomes for the millions of students enrolled. Some colleges are more successful than others, and often there is a correlation between college leadership and the levels of employee engagement, productivity, and student success (McMurray, 2010). There is a basic assumption that the role the community college president plays is the most critical in maintaining the viability of the institution (D'Aloia, 1984), so understanding how exemplary presidents lead using conversation can have a major impact on one of the largest institutions of higher education in America.

Furthermore, community colleges are experiencing mass retirements and turnover of community college presidents, so new hires are in the imminent future (Cooney, 2016), and administrations are particularly interested in the competencies deemed necessary for potential presidential candidates. In fact, AACC developed six competencies for effective leadership in a community college president, and communication topped the list (McNair, 2015). This is another indicator of the possible impact this research can have on the organizational development of community colleges and how they perceive the role conversation plays in its leadership. For instance, this study will assist administrations and district boards in being able to identify potential community college presidents by their communication practices, conversational competency, and their ability to lead using the principles identified through conversational leadership.

Another organization that will likely benefit from this research is the Association of California Community College Administrators (ACCCA). The goal of ACCCA is to develop and support community college leaders through "advocacy, professional development, and networking opportunities" (ACCCA, n.d.). Members of ACCCA can take part in workshops, conferences, and leadership coursework. As a result, if the outcomes of this study reveal that leaders who practice Groysberg and Slind's (2012) conversational elements to lead also have higher levels of employee engagement and productivity, then ACCCA could develop workshops and coursework aimed at teaching leaders to use these conversational practices. In addition, any academic institution offering undergraduate or graduate degrees in leadership could adopt coursework on conversational competency and the elements of conversation that lead to organizational success.

Finally, the results of this study can have an impact on the economy as a whole. For example, if the economy is fueled by organizational success and organizational success can be determined by conversational leadership, then the significance of this research has enormous and far-reaching potential.

Definitions

This section contains the relevant terms of this study and their definitions. The definitions are used to provide meaning to the specifics of this study and stem from previous research studies.

Theoretical Definitions

Behavior. An action, activity, or process that can be observed or measured (Dainton & Zelley, 2005; Griffin, 2012; West & Turner, 2010).

Exemplary. Someone set apart from peers in a supreme manner, suitable behavior, principles, or intentions that can be copied (Goodwin, Piazza, & Rozin, 2014).

Inclusion. The commitment to the process of engaging members of the organization to share ideas and participate in the development of the organization (Groysberg & Slind, 2012; Hurley & Brown, 2009).

Intentionality. Ensuring clarity of purpose that includes goals and direction to create order and meaning (Groysberg & Slind, 2012; Barge, 1985; Men, 2012).

Interactivity. Bilateral or multilateral exchange of comments and ideas, a back-and-forth process (Groysberg & Slind, 2012).

Intimacy. The closeness, trust, and familiarity created between people through shared experiences, meaningful exchanges, and shared knowledge (Glaser, 2014; Groysberg & Slind, 2012; Schwarz, 2011).

Delimitations

This study was delimited to 10 exemplary community college presidents in Southern California. This study considered an exemplary leader to be one who demonstrates four of the following six characteristics:

- evidence of successful relationships with followers;
- evidence of leading a successful organization;
- a minimum of 5 years of experience in the profession;
- articles, papers, or materials written, published, or presented at conferences or association meetings;
- recognition by their peers; or
- membership in professional associations within their field.

Organization of the Study

This study is organized into five chapters, complete with a bibliography and appendices. Chapter I provided an introduction to the topic as well as background information pertinent to the study of conversational leadership. In addition, a statement of the research problem, purpose statement, research questions, significance of the study, and the study's terms and definitions were also included. Chapter II provides an extensive review of the literature pertaining to the theories and research within organizational communication and the development of conversational leadership. Furthermore, the literature review in chapter II explores community college presidents and their roles in leadership and communication. Chapter III describes the methodology used to collect and analyze the data germane to this study. Chapter IV is a presentation of data collected and an in-depth analysis of the research findings. Chapter V is the final section of this study and provides a summary of the relevant findings, conclusions based on those findings, suggestions for proposed actions, and recommendations for future research.

CHAPTER II: REVIEW OF THE LITERATURE

Communication practices have evolved throughout history, largely resulting from advancements in technology. These advancements have changed how people interact, share information, and build relationships with one another both personally and professionally. In fact, business and organizational communication have evolved in profound ways due to the advancement of communication technologies (Stephens & Barrett, 2016). Some of these dramatic changes in communication stem from Johannes Gutenberg's invention of the printing press in 1440, the introduction of the broadcast radio in 1920, and the 1970s invention of the microprocessor (Whitcroft, 2011). However, it is the creation of the internet browser in the early 1990s that has led to the world living in a truly digital age by the turn of the 21st century. In fact, there are new digital methods of communication by which a message can be sent using 140 alphanumeric characters and by the simple push of a button (Koo, Wati, & Jung, 2011; Plotnick, 2015; Przybylski & Weinstein, 2012; Stephens & Barrett, 2016).

Information, both near and across the globe, is at our fingertips, and people often connect and communicate through social media sites, such as Facebook, Instagram, and Twitter (Nichols, 2012; Woodward, 2017). People even date or find romantic partnerships on social media with sites such as Zoosk, Match, or Eharmony ("Natural Intelligence," 2017). These changes in how people communicate socially have also changed how people interact at work. There is much less face-to-face contact even when people share the same workspace or have adjoining offices or cubicles. Rather, people at work often communicate through e-mails, texts, or other forms of technology. Therefore, it may be just as likely for one to communicate by e-mail with a colleague 10 feet away

as it is with a colleague in another country thousands of miles away. As a result, the world has become a globalized society where people interact in a condensed and overarching single community that spans the globe rather than as they once did from their distinct and separate communities (Robertson, 1992). Zhao (2009) added that globalization truly results from the advances made in transportation and communication technologies. Therefore, the world has become one community, and technology has eliminated distance as an obstacle.

Yet, has the elimination of physical distance created another type of distance in how we communicate? People are connecting and communicating less and less with face-to-face conversation. Turkle (as cited in Woodward, 2017) explained, "Many of the things we all struggle with in love and work can be helped by conversation. Without conversation, studies show that we are less empathic, less connected, less creative, and less fulfilled" (Woodward, 2017, p. 147). Similarly, as people interact more through technology and have fewer meaningful conversations with one another at work, their job satisfaction and engagement levels have also decreased to all-time lows. In fact, recent Gallup polls indicate that 71% of the American workforce is dissatisfied and disengaged at work (Crowley, 2011; Mautz, 2015). Furthermore, a European-wide study conducted in 2006 concluded that one's career fulfillment and satisfaction not only influence happiness but also is the number one factor in a person's overall satisfaction with life (Crowley, 2011). As employees become increasingly unsatisfied and disengaged, it is common to leave a job to find another that provides more meaning and purpose. In addition, disengaged employees are less efficient, which leads to organizations being less efficient, profitable, or successful. More and more experts find the provision of meaning,

purpose, and connectivity as an answer to disengagement (Crowley, 2011; Di Virgilio & Ludema, 2009; Groysberg & Slind, 2012; Mautz, 2015; Mayfield & Mayfield, 2002). As a result, if conversations guide people to connect, engage, and find meaning at work, then 21st-century leaders could benefit by incorporating conversation into their leadership strategies.

To understand the importance of leadership communication practices, it is equally important to understand the other factors that contribute to its development. In this study, a thorough literature review of leadership and organizational communication was completed and organized in four sections. The first section highlights the areas of historical change affecting leadership communication, while the second section provides information on the theories pertinent to the development of conversational leadership. The third section details the elements of conversational leadership, and the fourth section describes community college presidents and their role in using conversational leadership to lead their organizations.

Our Changing World

The world is continually evolving, and there is no area where there is more evidence of change as there is in the area of communication practices. Globalization has led to a world community, changing the way people interact, converse, and behave (Robertson, 1992). This is especially true for the communication practices associated with leadership and organizational development. Some of these changes are directly related to the advancements in transportation, technology, and commerce. Furthermore, understanding how these advancements have influenced the development of leadership

and communication practices in the workforce is an essential factor contributing to the concept of conversational leadership.

Elements of Change That Are Interrelated

Most of today's literature is in agreement as to the significance of having organizations with great leaders who are able to communicate well with those they lead at the helm (D. Anderson, 2015; Burns, 2003; Mayfield & Mayfield, 2002; Van Der Voet et al., 2014). However, what constitutes a great leader or an effective ability to communicate has evolved over time due to our changing world. Throughout history, leadership practices and communication styles have changed, and those changes are often interdependent on other areas of change in the world. In fact, when looking back in time from the view of the 21st century, the world has undergone significant and interrelated changes. Contemplating worldwide change often brings immediate thoughts of commerce, transportation, and technology. It is natural to see how these three areas of change relate to one another. For instance, the ability to trade increased exponentially with the improved ability to travel to distant lands. Technological advances created innovative modes of transportation. Other innovations in technology led to the development of new products for trade. These three elements of change are circular, each one affecting the other's development (Unger, 2015).

However, there are other components of great change where the relationships are not as obvious but just as significant. It was Belgian medieval historian, Henri Pirenne (1863-1935), who first postulated that there are relationships between changes in commerce, travel, and communication (Unger, 2015). He further proposed that the changes to commerce, travel, and communication influence how structures, practices, and

behaviors develop within society (Unger, 2015). Pirenne reasoned that the realities of trade changed when combined with the ability of people to trade with others from distant lands, and this allowed for professional communication practices to develop more fully.

Pirenne demonstrated that communication became imperative to commerce as those involved with the business act of trading were more successful only when they were able to communicate the value of their items for trade and to get others to make a fair exchange for those items (Pellegrino, 2007; Unger, 2015). Other historians, such as Michael McCormick, added to Pirenne's idea of these changes being interrelated with the premise that communication style and technology has directly affected commerce and the economy throughout history and will continue to do so into the future (Unger, 2015). He also concluded that business and communication practices drove the actions of politics and government and vice versa. Additionally, changes in commerce and business inevitably led to changes in how leaders ruled or how they were expected to rule (Pellegrino, 2007; Unger, 2015). Therefore, the history and development of transportation, technology, and commerce are directly related to the changes that have occurred in communication practices.

Transportation

It was not until the end of the 18th century that any type of motorized transportation existed. Prior to this, transportation relied on using animal labor for land transport and the wind to assist in maritime transport (Rodrigue, 2017). Since waterways were the most efficient transport systems, communities next to rivers were able to trade over longer distances and maintain economic, political, and cultural consistency over a larger territory. As a result, the first advanced civilizations emerged along river systems

for a variety of reasons, including the ability to trade (Rodrigue, 2017). Although

waterways made trade somewhat easier, it was still slow going. In fact, most trade was

local in scope due to the inability to carry heavy items for transport and travel any kind of

significant distance by land (Rodrigue, 2017). Therefore, most communication took

place between family and friends living in the same vicinity.

Communication practices changed in the early 1800s due to the Industrial

Revolution in Europe. The Industrial Revolution transformed the global landscape in

respects to travel, economic systems, politics, and social systems (Rodrigue, 2017).

During this time, canals and railroads were developed as a result of the creation of an

external combustion engine that allowed water travel and land travel to increase in speed

and distance.

New jobs were created resulting from the ability to travel to distance lands.

People traveled for business and social reasons. Trade took on an entirely new meaning

as did banking, the value of currency, and other economic systems. By the end of the

19th century, international transportation was rapidly evolving, especially with

improvements in engine propulsion technology of the steamship and a gradual shift from

coal to oil in the 1870s (Rodrigue, 2017). The urban population grew quickly and so did

the development of urban transportation systems. Electric energy helped to advance

transportation with tramways. People began to work away from their residences rather

than on their own lands. The bicycle was also invented at this time, which made it easier

for people who did not live near railroads, tramways, or developed roadways to get to

work (Rodrigue, 2017). Work communication was often task oriented and directed

through a supervisor. Money was the greatest motivator for worker engagement at this

time as people wanted to pay for their homes, their ability to travel, and other new

luxuries that technology had made possible (Crowley, 2011; Rodrigue, 2017).

Telecommunications

The industrial era also brought the first significant developments in

telecommunications, which changed the way business and personal information was

shared. In 1844, Samuel Morse built the first experimental telegraph line in the United

States between Washington and Baltimore, providing the ability to have information

travel more quickly than people could travel using the most advanced transportation

(Kovarik, 2016; Poe, 2011; Rodrigue, 2017). In 1866, the transatlantic telegraph line

became the first intercontinental telegraphic network. The growth of telecommunications

is closely related to the growth in transportation (railways and international shipping),

which is why the continental rail and telegraphic networks were often laid concurrently.

Every continent was connected through telegraph lines by 1895 (Kovarik, 2016;

Rodrigue, 2017). Because of the ability to communicate more quickly, business

transactions became more efficient as production, management, and consumption centers

could interact without delays. This was the beginning of the global information network

that would materialize in the late 20th century. The opportunities for people to travel and

to communicate both in person and through the telegraph changed how people interacted

socially and professionally. New businesses related to telecommunications and other

technologies began to emerge (Poe, 2011).

Communication

Increased abilities to communicate, travel, and mass-produce consumer goods led

to the development of new businesses, which influenced advertising, marketing, and

business communications (Poe, 2011; Waterhouse, 2017). In fact, the late 19th century and early 20th century birthed companies known as chain stores, such as Montgomery Wards, Sears, Macy's, and Bloomingdales, where staff were led by store managers (Waterhouse, 2017). Common practices of workplace communications focused on the goal of attracting and retaining customers were developed. Competition between companies grew, and it became imperative that companies be able to communicate their products and services through advertisement and marketing in a way that attracted more customers than their counterparts. Advertisers played a crucial role in cultural and economic structures. It was not enough to communicate facts about products, but advertisers had to communicate in a way that made consumers feel connected to the product (Waterhouse, 2017). Eliciting feelings through communication became a prevalent practice in business, which continues into the present. The act of eliciting positive feelings through communication also became important within the workforce itself as employees began to interact more and more with the consumer and with one another. Therefore, it became essential that these companies retain a knowledgeable workforce that was loyal to the company so they could influence and retain customers (Waterhouse, 2017). As a result, management leaders had to develop strong communication behaviors with their workforce, which in turn, led to the efficacy, productivity, and success of the company. These professional communication behaviors in business and leadership led to the importance of the emerging interdisciplinary study of organization development in the middle of the 20th century (D. Anderson, 2015). Leadership began to take on an entirely new meaning, one that was directly related to organizational or workplace leadership.

Leadership

Leadership practices have developed over time and are influenced by many environmental factors, such as changes in commerce and technology. However, no matter the influences that contribute to leadership practices, there is consensus within the literature that demonstrates the important and influential role leaders have to inspire, motivate, and engage employees within their organization (Ackerman-Anderson & Anderson, 2010; Barge, 2014; Burns, 2003; Kouzes & Posner, 2012; Mayfield & Mayfield, 2002; Ozlati, 2012; Willenberg, 2014). As the end of the second decade of the 21st century approaches and advances in technology continually create a growth in entrepreneurship and innovation, there are a multitude of new companies and organizations forming where the leadership practices will be more important than ever. In addition, as fast as new companies emerge, other companies cease to exist, so having an engaged and efficient workforce is critical to the sustainability of the organization. Unfortunately, employee engagement and satisfaction levels are still declining, so the relationship between leader and employee is more significant than ever (Crowley, 2011; Mautz, 2015; Mayfield & Mayfield, 2002). As Kouzes and Posner (2012) explained, "Leadership is a relationship between those who aspire to lead and those who choose to follow" (p. 30). The authors of the literature are confident that the communication practices used by leaders of an organization are crucial to the success of an organization, it is imperative to understand the contributing factors of successful leadership communication (Groysberg & Slind, 2012; Law, 2009; Van Der Voet et al., 2014; Seyranian, 2014; Willenberg, 2014).

Theoretical Background

Conversational leadership is a relatively new concept in organizational development and leadership practices. It has roots in well-established theories, such as leadership theory, communication theory, and social construction theory. Examining each of these theories provides greater clarity in understanding the development of conversational leadership and its relevance in our evolving and changing workforce.

Leadership Theory

Many experts agree that leadership is about influencing and mobilizing others to make positive and impactful contributions to an organization (Grenny, Patterson, Maxfield, McMillan, & Swiztler, 2013; Kouzes & Posner, 2012; Kuriger, 2006), while another primary facet is initiating and driving change within an organization (D. Anderson, 2015; Van Der Voet et al., 2014). As a result, experts, since the mid-1800s, have attempted to identify the leadership characteristics and the elements of leadership that act as catalysts in creating great leaders. There are a variety of leadership theories, such as the great man theory, trait theory, behavioral theory, transactional/management theory, and relationship/transformational theory, which attempt to explain these leadership characteristics and the elements of leadership needed to influence or affect followers.

Great man theory. One of the first leadership theories was offered up in 1840 by Scottish author, Thomas Carlyle, where he proposed that leadership was a set of specific traits that men were born with (Amanchukwu et al., 2015). Carlyle believed that leadership skills are inherent and when man is confronted with a situation that commands leadership, only men born with these inherent traits will rise to the challenge. The great

man theory was further developed in 1869 by Francis Galton in his book *Hereditary Genius*, where he also described leadership traits as innate qualities present at birth (Judge, Piccolo, & Kosalka, 2009). Therefore, the great man theory implied that leadership skills cannot be developed or learned as they are either present at birth or they are not (Amanchukwu et al., 2015; Bartels, 2017; Judge et al., 2009). This theory also suggests that these traits are only present in males, which lends clarification to the naming of the theory. Although the great man theory was disputed by others in the field, there was still a firm belief that the traits of the leader were the foundation necessary in becoming a great leader. Thus, trait theory began to emerge in the early 1900s to expand this notion further.

Trait theory. During the 1930s and 1940s, American Psychologist, Gordon Allport developed trait theory in response to the great man theory (Matthews et al., 2003). Similar to the great man theory, Allport also described leadership by the personality characteristics inherent to the leader. Although Allport reasoned that these innate personality traits were responsible for cultivating great leaders, he also suggested that these characteristics could be developed over time. Moreover, Allport and his colleagues identified over 18,000 personality characteristics and terms designed to differentiate man's leadership capabilities (Matthews et al., 2003). During this era, trait theory was the accepted model for leadership development even though scientific measures failed to support the theory. However, in the middle of the 1900s, models of behaviorism became more fully developed and were thought to be an origin for all human behaviors, including leadership behaviors. As a result, a new theory prevailed.

Behavioral theory. Behavioral theory emerged in an attempt to explain the origin of leadership capabilities. This theory varied widely from the trait theories preceding it by surmising that leadership characteristics were not innate, gender specific, or the same for all leaders. In fact, the behavioral theory of leadership focused on the behaviors of the leader that could be observed and/or measured rather than inherent personality characteristics associated with the earlier trait theories (Amanchukwu et al., 2015). The most significant difference in this model was the idea that leadership could be learned and was not based on qualities that are present at one's birth. Moreover, if leadership could be learned, then anyone had the opportunity to become a leader, male or female. With the creation of behavioral theory came a new accepted belief that leaders were made, not born (Bartels, 2017) and could learn to become leaders through leadership training and the observation of other leaders (Amanchukwu et al., 2015).

Contingency theory. Contingency theory of leadership was developed in response to the behavioral theory of leadership and therefore has a similar foundation. However, contingency theory varies from behavioral theory in its claim that leadership style and behavior changes across situations (Charry, 2012). Therefore, if one leader with a specific style and behavior leads successfully in one situation, this same leader may not be as successful in another situation that demands a different style of leadership behavior. As a result, being a great leader often results from the behaviors a leader expresses in response to the environmental stimuli, such as the situation, or the characteristics and needs of the followers. Thus, leadership becomes contingent on a variety of variables. Contingency theories of leadership materialized in the late 1950s

and were prominent until 1970 (Charry, 2012). Again, this leadership theory also

proposes that leadership can be learned and adapted based on environmental needs.

      Transactional/management theory. Although it was in 1947 that Max Weber

developed management theory to explain leadership, it was not until 1981 that researcher

Bernard Bass expanded upon it (Charry, 2012; Hater & Bass, 1988). This theory was

based on a hierarchical structure of leadership where the position and authority of the

leader is what ruled the organization. Management theory, also known as transactional

theory, was founded on the premise that leaders made the decisions and followers obeyed

those decisions (Burns, 2003; Hater & Bass, 1988). Furthermore, if followers failed to

comply with the leader's supreme authority, then punishments would ensue. These

punishments could vary from verbal lashings to demotion or termination. However, if

the followers of the organization submitted and obeyed the directions provided by the

leader, they would be rewarded as a method to ensure continued compliance. Moreover,

the overall success of the organization was determined to be the result of the leader's

ability to reward or punish based on employees' performance (Hater & Bass, 1988).

      Relationship/transformational theory. Relationship theory, also known as

transformational theory became prevalent in the latter part of the twentieth century and

continues to be a dominant theory guiding leadership and organizational development in

current times. Transformational theory focuses on the reciprocal relationship between the

leader and follower and how this interactive relationship is a conduit to the success of the

organization (D. Anderson, 2015; Burns, 2003; Groysberg & Slind, 2012). In fact,

leadership expert James MacGregor Burns (2003) stated that the "vigorous interaction

between transforming leaders and their followers is itself a powerful causal force for

[organizational] change" (p. 25). Therefore, within this theory, it is expected that the leader motivate, influence, and inspire followers, leading to stronger feelings of self-worth and self-efficacy as well as a greater sense of meaning and purpose in the work and lives of their followers (Burns, 2003; Crowley, 2011; Mautz, 2015). These leaders intentionally interact with followers to mobilize their participation in the organization and to encourage a collective identity based on the goals of the organization. Transformational leaders use intentional practices to cultivate trusting and interactive relationships with their followers so all parties are included in the development and success of the organization (Berson & Stieglitz, 2010; Boekhorst, 2015; Burns, 2003; McMurray, 2010, Moua, 2010). The literature on transformational leadership aligns with Groysberg and Slind's (2012) model of conversational leadership as it also proposes that exemplary leaders will use conversation to build trusting relationships that stem from an interactive and inclusive process.

Leadership Styles

Leadership theories have led to the development of varied leadership styles often associated with a specific theory. In addition, as leadership theory has evolved, so have leadership styles. For example, leadership styles have progressed from terms such as autocratic, bureaucratic, emergent, situational, strategic, transactional, and servant to the current terms of facilitative, authentic and transformational (Amanchukwu et al., 2015). Associated with these terms are behaviors and practices that leaders employ, resulting in the outcomes of the organizations in which they lead.

Transactional leadership style. In the transactional style of leadership, the leader instills order and structure through the compliance of organization members.

Creativity and innovation are minimized under this leadership style as the goal is to have

members complete established objectives in a fixed range of time. Transactional

leadership style is result-oriented leadership according to which maintaining routine and

following company rules and objectives are of paramount importance. Hierarchical

structures are in place, and conformity is expected. Success is measured according to that

organization's system of rewards and penalties (M. H. Anderson & Sun, 2017; Bass &

Riggio, 2006; Bin Jomah, 2017; Spahr, 2015). This leadership style is influenced by the

theory with the same name, transactional leadership theory.

       Autocratic and bureaucratic leadership style. Autocratic leadership is also

known as authoritarian leadership according to which the leader is considered ruler and

makes decisions with little to no input from followers. Leaders who practice this style

are often viewed as controlling and consistently overlook the knowledge and expertise of

their group members. The autocratic leadership style is associated with the

transactional/management theory of leadership. Organizations that employ leaders with

this leadership style consistently have employees who have low engagement levels and

feel devalued by the company and their leader (Hoyle, 2012; Kiplangat, 2017).

Similarly, the bureaucratic style of leadership also maintains a hierarchical structure as

the leader is positioned in the role of supreme authority over followers. However, this

style is also based on fixed duties, using a system of rules for management and decision

making. As a result, the leader does not make decisions or perform tasks arbitrarily but

performs based on concise lines of authority, responsibility, and accountability (Charry,

2012; Egri & Herman, 2000; Lok & Crawford, 2004). Unlike the autocratic style, the

bureaucratic leader is placed in his or her position based on his or her developed abilities

and expertise, aligning this style more with behavioral theories of leadership though there are also aspects of the transactional/management theory.

Emergent leadership style. In contrast to bureaucratic leadership, the emergent style of leadership focuses on the leaders' behaviors that begin to emerge based on their interactions with group members. As a result, the leader is not placed in his or her position based on innate qualities or expertise but on behaviors displayed with fellow employees. It is the idea of moving up the ladder by the leader's established relationships, group behaviors, performance, and a connectedness to the organization (Carte, Chidambaram, & Becker, 2006; Eagly, Johannesen-Schmidt, & van Engen, 2003; Levine, 2014). This style can align with multiple theories, such as behavioral theory, contingency theory, or relationship theory.

Situational leadership style. Situational leadership style is based on the leader's ability to adapt to a variety of situations based on workplace variables and then lead the organization according to what is needed. This strategy has an emphasis on a leader's ability to collaborate with his or her team members by choosing the leadership style that best fits the circumstances and the goals of the organization (Blanchard, Zigarmi, & Nelson, 1993; Moorosi & Bantwini, 2016; Spahr, 2015). As a result, the situational style of leadership closely aligns with contingency theory.

Strategic leadership style. Strategic leadership style refers to a leader's ability to motivate and influence organizational members to meet and exceed the goals of the organization. Strategic leaders will focus energies on developing a strategic vision for the organization while influencing constituents to adopt that same vision. These leaders are adept at identifying and utilizing the strengths of their organizational members, which

also makes these leaders great at delegating tasks. They also encourage their members to be creative and innovative as they work toward the organization's vision. Finally, strategic leaders regularly use a reward and incentive system to build a rapport with organization members so that they are productive and effective. This style can be found in both behavioral theory and relationship theory of leadership (Leitch, Lancefield, & Dawson, 2016; Vera & Crossan, 2004).

Servant leadership style. Servant leadership style places the idea of serving others (inside the organization and out) before traditional leadership behaviors. It is really identified as a social leadership style based on developing and maintaining relationships. In fact, leaders with this style place the needs of others as their priority. Servant leaders have the goal to address the responsibilities and relationships within organizations. In addition, servant leadership begins with a vision for the organization, whereby leaders see their role as supporting members so they can realize that vision. They often provide resources, opportunities for growth, and training so that the organization's members feel prepared, valued, and skilled in performing their duties. They are great communicators who intentionally offer empathy, guidance, and care to followers and create deep and meaningful relationships with them. Servant leaders are also constructive, persistent, and motivating in the pursuit of organizational goals (M. H. Anderson & Sun, 2017; Greenleaf, 2002; Kouzes & Posner, 2006; Spahr, 2015). This style of leadership aligns with the relationship and transformational theory of leadership.

Facilitative leadership style. The facilitative style of leadership resembles its given name and leaders who employ this style of leadership include all members in the planning and decision-making process of the organization. Facilitative leaders are people

centered, and they work to develop relationships between all members. These leaders value teamwork and collaboration and make this a priority. They often depend on organizational goals being completed through the interactive behaviors of employees. These leaders facilitate group dynamics and encourage individuals to provide input and challenge assumptions. They do make decisions based on input, but afterwards they fully explain the rationale behind the decision so each person has clarity. They communicate well and provide clear information as to the expectations regarding behavior, roles, and desired outcomes. Facilitative leaders value consensus and provide direction and guidance so that all members feel empowered by their contributions (Conley & Goldman, 1994; Greasley & Stoker, 2008; Korkmaz, 2007). The facilitative style falls in line with the relationship and transformational theory of leadership.

   Authentic leadership style. Authentic leadership style is fairly new and has emerged as a prominent style of leadership in the last couple of decades. The premise is that leaders of this style are self-aware or self-actualized, which will lead to their self-regulated, positive behaviors. Authentic leaders are considered to be emotionally intelligent and are aware of their strengths, their limitations, and their emotions. These leaders understand that self-actualization is a continuous journey, so they consistently self-evaluate. Authentic leaders are also genuine, and they reveal their real self to their followers. They are not fearful of being vulnerable and understand that those they lead will develop a greater sense of trust if they are transparent and truthful. They usually lead with both heart and mind and often show empathy and care when leading others. Authentic leaders are able to place the goals of the organization before their own goals. They are ethical and principled in decision making and involve others within the

organization. Authentic leaders enjoy assisting others in their own development, and

they are strategic enough to understand the value that brings to the organization (M. H.

Anderson & Sun, 2017; Bass & Riggio, 2006; Kruse, 2013; Mazutis & Slawinski, 2007;

Walumbwa, Avolio, Gardner, Wernsing, & Peterson, 2008). Authentic leadership style

fits within relationship and transformational theory.

   Transformational leadership style. In the transformational leadership style,

leaders use empathy and inspiration to engage and motivate employees.

Transformational leaders lead by example and often possess an ability to change things

within an organization that no longer works or can be improved upon. They are very

inclusive with their followers and work to develop the individual as well as the team.

Transformational leaders are very influential and are able to get others to achieve

unexpected or remarkable results. They encourage employees to work autonomously and

allow them to use authority in respect to their specific duties and goals. They believe in

staff development and training so their employees feel competent and engaged in their

work. Transformational leaders are known to increase morale and job satisfaction with

their confidence, positivity, and motivational behaviors. They often excel at conflict

resolution and understand that employees perform better when they have input and can

contribute to the vision and goals of the organization (Ackerman-Anderson & Anderson,

2010; M. H. Anderson & Sun, 2017; Bass & Riggio, 2006; Burns, 2003; Kouzes &

Posner, 2006). The transformational style of leadership falls within the characteristics

detailed in relationship and transformational theory.

Communication Theory

Communication is a commonplace term used in a variety of ways and is intended to imply a process by which one organism transfers information to another (Cobley & Schulz, 2013). However, communication as a field of study is much more complicated and is continually evolving. Although communication has been discussed and theorized by experts across disciplines, it did not become an organized field of study until the twentieth century. Moreover, as this new discipline emerged, many of its models and theories focused on it being a system of information transport. Therefore, discussion concentrated on assessing the process by which information was transferred between two points or the speed of which the information was transferred between two points (Cobley & Schulz, 2013). Consequently, the first two communication textbooks published, *The Mathematical Theory of Communication* (by Shannon & Weaver) and *Cybernetics* (by Wiener) aimed at discerning the processes and speed of communication practices (Cobley & Cobley, 2013). Although both of these books are still included in communication theory and considered to be an important facet of communication, most experts consider them information or transmission theories rather than communication theories due to their lack of focus on semantics (Habermas, 1984; Hayles, 1999; Cobley & Schulz, 2013). For example, mathematical theory and cybernetics exclude the meaning behind the transmission of messages. In fact, Shannon, Weaver, and Wiener expressed that their research was designed to explore the engineering problem involved with information transmission and that semantic aspects of communication were irrelevant (Cobley & Schulz, 2013). However, these theories revealed relevant aspects of the basic processes involved with information transmission and stimulated the development of many other

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communication theories. In fact, some theorists enthusiastically received these theories, while many social scientists actively rejected these theories as being incomplete, and new theories emerged.

As a result, the landscape of communication theory changed dramatically when psychologists, Hovland and Schramm, began merging social psychology theory and information theory (Luhmann, 1990; MacKay, 1969; Cobley & Schulz, 2013). Hovland and Schramm studied the content of communication and the various ways in which communication occurred. However, the interdisciplinary field of communication evolved further with Berger's uncertainty reduction theory. This theory was developed in 1975 and focused on a specific type of communication, which made observation and data collection easier to achieve. Berger and Calabrese established this theory in 1975by studying communication practices between individuals who were in the beginning stages of a new relationship. The variables studied were conversations, nonverbal expressiveness, information-seeking behavior, reciprocity of information sharing, the intimacy content of conversations, perceived similarity and liking between communicators, and degree of shared communication networks (Cobley & Schulz, 2013). As a result, this study has become the foundation for research on content communication that is currently being used by researchers to further the understanding of communication. Furthermore, the outcomes of the Berger and Calabrese study revealed the importance of conversation as a facet of communication.

Communication theory also evolved in relation to leadership and organizational development during the latter half of the 20th century. This new understanding in communication grew when organizational psychologist Karl Weick proposed in 1969 that

organizational goals changed and evolved through the interactive communication that happened between the organization's members. Weick suggested that the way to reduce uncertainty within the organization was through communication between management and employees, leading to the unification of organizational goals (Cobley & Schulz, 2013). Weick further postulated that good leadership communication within an organization would lead to "sensemaking" for the organization's members. Much of the literature agrees with the notion that leadership communication plays an active role in creating meaning and purpose within the organization (Crowley, 2011; Groysberg & Slind, 2012; Kouzes & Posner, 2012; Mautz, 2015; Mayfield & Mayfield, 2002). In fact, many experts imply that it is these leadership communication skills that are responsible for creating a unified and shared knowledge among organization members as well as influencing employees' motivation, commitment, and performance within the organization (Mayfield & Mayfield, 2002; Mazutis & Slawinski, 2007).

Though leadership communication skills have been noted by experts as being a vital aspect of organizational success, there has been a bevy of relatively new research demonstrating that the art of conversation is the most crucial element of organizational communication (Barge et al., 1989; Berson & Stieglitz, 2013; Hurley & Brown, 2010; Mayfield & Mayfield, 2002; Mazutis & Slawinski, 2007; Nichols, 2012; Weber, 2013). As a result, Weick's contributions to communication theory and subsequent research on organizational communication have laid a strong foundation for Groysberg and Slind's (2012) model of conversation leadership.

Social Construction Theory

The social construction theory itself grew from Berger and Luckman's (1966) seminal work *The Social Construction of Reality,* in which they posited that all knowledge is gained from and maintained through social interactions. As a result, when social construction theory is applied to organizational development, the organization is seen as becoming what it is based on the social interactions of its members. This is in contrast to classical organization theories, which see the organization as its own living being (D. Anderson, 2015). Therefore, social construction theory places the actions and language of the organization's members at the forefront of its ability to change, grow, and be effective. D. Anderson (2015) concurred with this assessment by concluding that the building that houses an organization or the products and services sold from an organization can exist alone, but the organization cannot exist without the interactions of its members. Instead, social construction theory perceives that the constructs of an organization have little meaning without it being created and developed by its members. Another example provided by D. Anderson (2015) demonstrated that data can exist within an organization, but until those data are "interpreted by its members, there is no meaning assigned to it" (p. 82). This also correlates with Wieck's seminal work mentioned in communication theory, in which he places sensemaking at the center of the organization. In 1983, Putnam provided further explanation into the importance of sensemaking or finding meaning within an organization by proposing that meaning stems from the interactive processes and the ways in which members make sense of their conversations (Cobley & Schulz, 2013).

In addition, both social construction theory and communication theory position the leader at the forefront of influencing the sensemaking of the organization and providing direction for communication practices and relationship building. For instance, relationships between supervisors and employees or among employees are not rigid or fixed. Rather, these relationships are multidimensional and can be cooperative or contentious depending on the type of interactive communication that transpires (D. Anderson, 2015; Ford & Ford, 1995). Social construction theory holds that workplace relationships are built by the actions and the interactive, inclusive, and intentional conversations of its members; i.e., building cooperative relationships is an active choice (D. Anderson, 2015; Ford & Ford, 1995). Therefore, social construction theory has numerous elements that are pertinent factors in the development of conversational leadership.

Conversational Leadership

Conversational leadership has developed through a long history of advancements in technology, transportation, and commerce, combined with the information gained in seminal works from experts in leadership, communication, and social construction theories. In fact, conversational leadership is a vast evolution of ideas postulated in the discoveries of researchers attempting to define the aspects of great leadership and organizational success. The above literature reflects a growing perspective that the interaction between the leader and employee develops into an imperative relationship that fuels the efficacy of an organization. Thus, these interactions often result from the workplace conversations that occur and have been shown to be a critical factor in the sharing of knowledge, developing trust, and strengthening relationships as well as

engaging and motivating the members of the organization (Mayfield & Mayfield, 2002; Mazutis & Slawinski, 2007).

Since conversation is seen as a driving force within an organization, it is imperative for organizational leaders to develop conversational strategies that will lead to these aforementioned characteristics needed for their organizations to thrive. In the last decade, many experts have been researching and noting the significance of conversational leadership by writing comprehensive books explaining its value. For example, Judith Glaser's (2014) *Conversational Intelligence* explained that leaders must become adept at conversation skills in order to drive organizational change as well as to build trust, loyalty, and a mutual understanding between employees. Weber's (2013) *Conversational Capacity* also discussed the importance of conversational skills in providing a rich and diverse working environment, where organization members feel valued and have a clear understanding of the processes and goals for the organization. Berson and Stieglitz's (2013) *Leadership Conversations* provided further insight into the importance of leadership conversations when the authors expressed the need for leaders to use conversation to build trust, develop others, make decisions, and take action within an organization. Furthermore, Groysberg and Slind (2012) developed a model for conversational leadership in their book, *Talk, Inc*. The authors discussed a framework for conversational leadership that includes four elements: intimacy, interactivity, inclusion, and intentionality. Consequently, there is a need for leaders to have a model of conversational leadership so they can cultivate superior conversational skills and abilities to lead their organizations. As a result, this literature review examines these four elements outlined in Groysberg and Slind's (2012) model.

The Four Elements of Conversational Leadership

Groysberg and Slind's (2012) model of conversational leadership includes four elements of conversation that exemplary leaders use to lead their organizations. These four elements include intimacy, interactivity, inclusion, and intentionality, all of which support the building of relationships, the exchange and sharing of information, encouragement in the diversity of thoughts and ideas, workplace efficiency, commitment, and engagement as well as a sense of meaning and purpose within the organization.

Intimacy

Trust is the glue of life. It is the most essential ingredient in effective communication. It is the foundational principle that holds all relationships.

—Stephen Covey, *The 7 Habits of Highly Effective People*

Groysberg and Slind's (2012) first element of conversational leadership is intimacy and is defined as the closeness, trust, and familiarity created between people through shared experiences, meaningful exchanges, and shared knowledge (Glaser, 2014; Groysberg & Slind, 2012; Schwarz, 2011). The literature indicates the importance of intimacy, though some define it by trust or familiarity, and others define it through building relationships (Berson & Stieglitz, 2013; Groysberg & Slind, 2012; Mayfield & Mayfield, 2002; Mazutis & Slawinski, 2007). No matter what terms define intimacy, it is agreed that closeness and trust in an organization are achieved through conversation (Di Virgilio & Ludema, 2009; Groysberg & Slind, 2012; Harrison & Mühlberg, 2014). Therefore, conversational intimacy encompasses the idea that interpersonal connections are built through conversation. Many experts agree that the foundation to intimacy is trust, and trust is essential for relationships to develop fully within an organization

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(Groysberg & Slind, 2012; Mayfield & Mayfield, 2002; Mazutis & Slawinski, 2007).

Moreover, Bartels (2017) clarified that extraordinary leaders invoke trust both inside and

outside their organizations and cannot sustain relationships without trust. As a result, in

order for a leader to cultivate trust from followers, that leader must become vulnerable by

first trusting those they lead. Kouzes and Posner (2012) proposed that an individual who

cannot trust others will not become a great leader because he or she is unable to be

dependent on the words and works of others. They went on to state that the lack of trust a

leader has in others will boomerang and that same leader will be deemed untrustworthy.

Furthermore, Groysberg and Slind (2012) stated, "Where there is no trust, there can be no

intimacy" (p. 18). However, Maier (2009) contended that a mere conversation will not

nurture trust, but rather it is the content and interactions between the participants of the

conversation that will influence a trusting relationship to develop. Therefore, leaders

must use conversation to get to know organizational members on a deeper and more

intimate level by asking thoughtful questions and being mindful of the content of their

responses. As a result, trust plays an enormous role in cultivating intimacy with others,

and leaders should communicate in a personal, transparent, and authentic way.

Groysberg and Slind (2012) contended that leaders who use conversational intimacy to

share what they know, to share what they do not know, to encourage honest and open

feedback, to hear what employees have to say, to address all topics, even those that are

thought to be off limits, will increase trust and, therefore, intimacy within their

organization.

Another aspect of conversational intimacy is the idea that exemplary leaders

succeed at getting close to their employees. Groysberg and Slind (2012) explained this

closeness as shrinking the gap that inherently exists between supervisor and employee.

These gaps are described as literal, institutional, and psychological. The literal gaps have

to do with proximity. Therefore, having one-on-one and face-to-face conversations with

employees is a way to remove physical distance. Somos (2014) explained that great

leaders take the time to have face-to-face conversations with employees, to make deeper

connections, and improve relationships and morale. Though many leaders use team

meetings, e-mail, and other technological means to convey messages to employees, there

is much more intimacy in a face-to-face conversation. In fact, Ruben and Gigliotti (2016)

stated that leaders need to demonstrate their attentiveness by nodding, paying attention,

and having appropriate responses during a conversation to demonstrate their investment

in the employee, and this cannot be accomplished at the same level through e-mail or

team meetings. Groysberg and Slind (2012) provided an example of eliminating distance

by having the supervisor use an open-door policy to encourage intimate conversation. An

open-door policy reassures employees that it is okay to reach out to their supervisor or to

seek assistance or clarification for an issue whenever they feel the need (Groysberg &

Slind, 2012). This allows for greater collaboration and a reciprocal relationship between

supervisor and employee. Furthermore, experts agree that it is also important for the

supervisor to seek out the employee by visiting the employee's office or reaching out to

them for a chat (Ruben & Giliotti, 2016; Somos, 2014). By doing this, the leader has

modeled this behavior for the employee to emulate (Groysberg & Slind, 2012). Le Fevre

and Robinson (2015) concluded that during these face-to-face conversations, leaders need

to be confident in their conversational skills to ensure a dynamic back-and-forth dialogue

that is respectful and productive, which can lessen the hierarchical gap that exists between them.

Other gaps that exist between supervisor and employee are the institutional and psychological gaps that occur. These gaps often result by mere position, organizational structure, location and size of office space, and a culture of compliance to authority (Groysberg & Slind, 2012; Ruben & Gigliotti, 2016). Shrinking these gaps has less to do with proximity and more to do with the distance created by the roles within the organization. As a result, leaders should shrink the psychological presence of distance by being personable, open, and authentic when having conversations with members of their organizations (Glaser, 2014; Groysberg & Slind, 2012; Mazutis & Slawinski, 2007).

Though Groysberg and Slind (2012) and other experts stated that eliminating distance is a very important aspect in creating intimate conversations, it is not the only aspect. The content of the conversation is, itself, a necessary feature in creating an intimate conversation. For instance, not all workplace conversations contain topics that are positive or free from controversy. In *Crucial Conversations* (Patterson, Grenny, McMillan, & Switzler, 2012), the authors discussed a leader's responsibility in providing a safe environment for difficult conversations and approaching the conversation in a thoughtful way. They further stated that when employees feel safe to speak openly and trust the motives and abilities of their leader, they are more likely to engage and be productive even when topics are challenging. When employees feel they are safe, they are also more likely to provide feedback to their supervisor, even if this feedback comes as a complaint or an issue of concern for the employee (Kegan & Lahey, 2001; Patterson et al., 2012). In fact, if conversational intimacy is achieved, difficult conversations,

complaints, and organizational problems are more easily diffused through an honest and transparent conversation between members who feel close to one another (Berson & Stieglitz, 2013; Ford & Ford, 1995; Kegan & Lahey, 2001).

Whether the conversation is difficult, informational, or personal, the leader is the one who needs to set the tone and create a culture of conversational intimacy. Groysberg and Slind (2012) provided examples from exemplary leaders who have achieved conversational intimacy. These examples include suggestions of having smaller, more intimate meetings in a welcoming and neutral space. This is especially true if the organization is large and there are many members. Often this entails the supervisor or leader repeating topics in order to deliver information to smaller groups. By doing this, the leader is able to have better eye contact, and doing this also provides a better forum for feedback without too many employees competing to be heard simultaneously. Furthermore, it is important for the leader to get close to all of his or her employees, not just the ones who are direct reports or are located in close proximity (Berson & Stieglitz, 2013; Somos, 2014). Berson and Stieglitz (2013) stated that these workplace conversations are the most important thing a leader can have to "strengthen existing relationships, build new ones and build employee relationships into strong cohesive teams" (p. 35).

Though conversational intimacy is the first element of Groysberg and Slind's conversational leadership model, there are three more elements that are equally important and needed for exemplary leaders. However, intimacy is the foundation that the next three are built upon. Berson and Stieglitz (2013) explained that building relationships is a cycle that must be repeated in order to make decisions and to take action within an

organization. This explanation demonstrates that decision making and action cannot be fully achieved until relationships are built.

Interactivity

A conversation is a dialogue, not a monologue.

—Truman Capote, 1962

Interactivity is the second element of Groysberg and Slind's model of conversational leadership and is defined in this study as a bilateral or multilateral exchange of comments and ideas, a back-and-forth process (Groysberg & Slind, 2012; Liden & Graen, 1980; Michael, 2014). Therefore, interactive conversations are back-and-forth conversations between two or more members that include sharing of information, knowledge, and ideas as they pertain to the organization. The element of interactivity "reinforces and builds upon the element of intimacy" (Groysberg & Slind, 2012, p. 63). It is through an interactive conversation that a partnership is built, and intimacy can only occur if both parties in the conversation are contributing to the dialogue. However, due to globalization and the advent of technological communication devices, the art of conversation has fallen to the wayside and members within an organization need to recapture the ability to converse with one another in a meaningful way (Miller, 2006). For example, during the last several decades, organizations have communicated in a unidirectional mode by providing information to employees through magazines, newsletters, brochures and posters (Groysberg & Slind, 2012). In these types of communication, the information is distributed top-down and in one direction, and a transparent and interactive process fails to occur. In recent years, websites, e-mails, and some forms of social media have also been used by organizations to push information out

to employees. Though social media can result in a two-way conversation, it has often lacked the face-to-face interaction needed for a more intimate relationship to develop.

However, there are times that organizations have difficulty meeting with members regularly and in-person, with face-to-face interaction, so technology must be utilized. Fortunately, new technologies have emerged that inspire a more interactive approach to having workplace conversations across distances. For example, Groysberg and Slind (2012) identified the use of wikis and blogs by leaders to allow for an immediate and casual style of communication for conveying news and opinion that is interactive. Another popular way to use technology that will allow for a bilateral or multilateral conversation is through web-enabled video chat services, such as Skype (Groysberg & Slind, 2012; Koo et al., 2011). This method allows both parties to participate in the conversation and still see one another, which provides a more meaningful exchange. The most important part of an interactive conversation is that both parties feel comfortable and safe to contribute to the contents of the conversation, which also overlaps with the element of inclusion (Groysberg & Slind 2012; Law, 2009; Patterson et al., 2012). Video conferencing is another way that exemplary leaders engage those within their organization when physical distance, organizational growth, or space is an issue. Through video conferencing, trust and rapport can still be achieved as participants are able to see others' facial expressions and body movements while conversing, adding richness to the experience (Groysberg & Slind, 2012). Leaders using this technology do so with the intent of coming as close as possible to person-to-person contact. However, Nichols (2012) cautioned that technology has added to the distribution and access to information within the organization, and though information can travel through

technology, it still lives within people. Therefore, technologically based conversation

methods can be useful but cannot replace the benefits associated with a dynamic two-

way, back-and-forth conversation. In fact, Przbylski and Weinstein (2012) concluded

that communication technology may actually serve as a barrier to human interactions and

may impede the development of meaningful conversations, so it is important to choose

methods that provide an experience that closely mimics the in-person experience.

Therefore, an in-person conversation is still one of the most important facets of work

whenever this possibility exists. However, if globalization and distance make this too

difficult and technology is used as a communication tool, it is imperative to choose a tool

that fosters bilateral and multilateral conversation capabilities (Groysberg & Slind, 2012).

A vital characteristic of interactive conversational leadership is the development

of the leader's social identity with colleagues and followers. Van Vugt (2012) suggested

that great leaders develop relationships with others within the organization by interacting

with them regularly. This interaction is through conversation and social behaviors tied to

the goals and purpose of the organization. Moreover, leaders need to be interactive to

instill a sense of commonality and interdependence with followers. If employees feel that

their leader is just as dependent on them as they are on the leader, then there becomes a

shared ownership and responsibility toward the organization and its goals (Groysberg &

Slind, 2012; Necsulescu & Mironov, 2011; Van Vugt, 2012).

Another central trait of interactivity is for leaders to show who they really are

through their conversations. Interactivity is about authenticity (Groysberg & Slind, 2012;

Mazutis & Slawinski, 2007). When a leader disguises who they are by putting on airs

and wearing an invisible mask, employees will sense their inauthenticity and will be

weary of contributing to the conversation. Furthermore, it is not enough to initiate a

conversation and hope that it will become a back-and-forth, open exchange. Leaders

must create a culture of interactivity and invite each person to participate, especially

those who may be less inclined to do so (Berson & Stieglitz, 2013; Groysberg & Slind,

2012; Weber, 2013). The best decisions are made when there is an interactive discussion

between leaders and stakeholders, so it is the responsibility of the leader to model this

behavior so it becomes institutionalized (Mazutis & Slawinski, 2007). Without these

interactive conversations, organizations cannot effectively exchange ideas or develop

shared understandings. Moreover, it is through these shared understandings that

employees find meaning and purpose within the organization and therefore become

committed and engaged in their work (Crowley, 2011; Mautz, 2015).

Inclusion

> Communication leads to community, that is, to understanding, intimacy and
> mutual valuing.

—Rollo May, 1972

The third element of Groysberg and Slind's (2012) model for conversational

leadership is inclusion, which is defined in this study as a commitment to the process of

engaging stakeholders to share ideas and participate in the development of the

organization (Groysberg & Slind, 2012; Hurley & Brown, 2009). This element is built

upon by the two elements preceding it: intimacy and interactivity. Since conversational

intimacy is about building trust and relationships and interactive conversation is about

developing a dynamic back-and-forth dialogue between two or more people, inclusion is

about making sure that all members of the organization experience and participate in both

conversational intimacy and interactive conversation. Therefore, inclusion happens when leaders commit to creating an inclusive work environment where all parties participate in the development and decision making of the organization (Berson & Stieglitz, 2013; Groysberg & Slind, 2012; Wolper, 2016). An inclusive environment provides an avenue for all voices to be heard, which leads to employees who are invested and engaged in the goals of the organization. Connell (2010) explained that employee engagement is one of five primary areas that can predict organizational performance and success. Crowley (2011) mirrored this with the assertion that employee engagement is one of the greatest predictors of an organization's efficiency and success by providing data demonstrating that 72% of highly engaged workers believe they can and do contribute to the success of the organization. Unfortunately, recent Gallup polls have revealed that only 29% of the American workforce is highly engaged (Connell, 2010; Crowley, 2011; Mautz, 2015). The other 71% is unengaged or actively disengaged. Disengaged employees can be burdensome to an organization and impede its success, which makes inclusion that much more critical. For instance, some disengaged workers can "sleepwalk" through their day, adding additional workload for others and creating financial burdens for the company. Other disengaged employees act out their dissatisfaction and unhappiness while undermining the work and behaviors of engaged workers (Connell, 2010). Lack of engagement also leads to an increase in employee turnover, which leads to financial burdens for the organization (Crowley, 2011; Mautz, 2013). Therefore, using conversational inclusion to create an engaged workforce can hold many benefits for the organization, such as cost savings due to employee loyalty, organizational success, and satisfied members of the organization (Crowley, 2011; Mayfield & Mayfield, 2002).

Inclusion also ensures that there is diversity of thoughts and ideas so that many viewpoints are considered in organizational decision making. Groysberg and Slind (2012) explained that it is one thing for a leader to express interest in listening to employees and quite another for employees to feel that their expertise, ideas, and opinions will be valued. Furthermore, Barge et al. (1989) proposed that it is the leader's job to include all employees in cocreating the vision and goals of the organization by facilitating dialogue between members and ensuring everyone has a unified understanding. Many experts agree that including all organizational members in the decision making leads to better outcomes for the organization (Glaser, 2014; Gurteen, 2015; Kegan & Lahey, 2001; Meng, 2015; Ruben & Gigliotti, 2016; Wolper, 2016). Leaders who practice conversational inclusion learn more about the skills and strengths of their members through inclusive dialogue and facilitate the further development of these strengths so they can be used to meet organizational goals.

Leaders who use conversation to be inclusive must also be skilled at communicating based on needs of the individual organizational members. For example, people are diverse in age, gender, religion, culture, race, and abilities, to name a few. Therefore, a conversationally adept leader will be aware of these differences and reframe conversations to ensure everyone is being included (Connell, 2010; Hurley & Brown, 2010; Nichols, 2012; Patterson et al., 2012). Furthermore, the literature demonstrates that inclusion is about developing a collective intelligence for the organization, where contributions are made by all members and at every level of diversity (Berson & Stieglitz, 2013; Groysberg & Slind, 2012; Hurley & Brown, 2010; Moua, 2010). Researchers Hurley and Brown (2010) proposed that exceptional leaders engage all

stakeholders and cross-pollinate their planning and decision-making processes with diverse perspectives. As a result, the leader must get to know his or her organizational members on an individual level and a collective level through conversation. This means that the leader must listen and retain the information learned through conversation (Willenberg, 2014). For example, it is not enough for the leader to know that employee "A" is a millennial-Latina-female and assume how these characteristics interact with others in the organization. Rather, the leader must also understand how those characteristics influence her participation in and contributions to the organization (Kouzes & Posner, 2006). This can be accomplished when the leader asks questions that encourage employee "A" to express how she envisions her role within the organization. It can also benefit to have staff development and trainings that foster workplace diversity and cultural intelligence and then have conversations afterwards that further a deeper understanding (Moua, 2010).

Mimicking intimacy, inclusion is also used to develop trust and mutual respect between the leader and members and also among the members of the organization. Therefore, the inclusive conversational skills of the leader can provide an avenue to develop this trust and respect. One way the leader can do this by having the courage to share his or her own story (Berson & Stieglitz, 2013). Crowley (2011) described that when leaders get to know their employees, and in turn, let their employees get to know them, they create a more engaged and efficient workforce. Experts also agree that when a leader is able to share his or her own story with strengths and weaknesses, employees will feel safe in doing the same. Therefore, sharing must initiate with the leader so the members of the organization can emulate those behaviors and reciprocate (Connell, 2010;

Glaser, 2014; Mazutis & Slawinski, 2007; Necsulescu & Mironov, 2011). As a result of an inclusive environment, organizational members become invested in both the leader and the organization. It is through this mutual relationship that a collective identity grows. Kouzes and Posner (2006) explained that followers want to know the leader's "values and beliefs, aims and aspirations, and hopes and dreams" (p. 52). Moreover, they want to feel connected to the leader as it makes them feel included and trusted by the leader (Di Virgilio & Ludema, 2009; Groysberg & Slind, 2012; Mautz, 2015). Organizational members want to share a common experience or feel a common emotion with their leader, which reduces the hierarchical gap that exists between them. In fact, Rosen (2004) asked leaders to remember that the term common is found in both community and communication, which are the foundational aspects of conversational inclusion. Therefore, adept leaders use their communication skills to build community through inclusive conversational behaviors.

Another aspect of having an inclusive environment is providing a forum where members can share ideas and brainstorm together. This can be done through in-person meetings or through technological mechanisms. Many times, technology can assist in providing these forums by utilizing wikis or blogs. These can be used for people to brainstorm and provide input (Koo et al., 2011; Stephens & Barrett, 2016). Technological mechanisms can also be used to share personal stories or to connect people by their commonality among their stories. Groysberg and Slind (2012) provide several examples of these technological capabilities to provide an inclusive environment for employees and to keep organizational conversation going. One of these examples was a company that gave presentations with pictures of their employees next to a question that

read, "What inspires you?" (p. 149). Employees were then able to provide answers related to what they felt inspires them personally, professionally, and in regard to their specific work assignment. This allowed for employees to feel a greater connection to one another and to understand each other on a deeper level. In fact, this same organization encouraged an employee-driven social media site where employee profiles, thoughts, and ideas are routinely shared. In addition, this site is used as a sounding board for internal and external experiences that may hinder workplace performance so employees can brainstorm together in overcoming obstacles and difficulties. Having systems like this create an avenue for an inclusive and collaborative environment among employees.

Inclusive leaders also encourage employees to share their talents and abilities with others. Having employee spotlights gives organizational members an opportunity to shine and be seen within the company and maybe even outside of the company (Groysberg & Slind, 2012). Numerous experts agree that reward systems work best when employees are encouraged to shine and are recognized for their contributions (Chapman, 2013; Crowley, 2011; Mautz, 2015; Sinek, 2009; Somos, 2014). In fact, in one study conducted by Merino and Privado (2015), the authors concluded that employee recognition is key to a healthy and engaged workforce. Moreover, results of this study also found that employee recognition in the presence of or from fellow employees provided the greatest measure of psychological well-being. Brun and Dugas (2008) proposed that employee recognition leads to employees feeling appreciated by their team and this creates job satisfaction. Furthermore, they postulate that job satisfaction has an immediate impact on organizational productivity and performance. Therefore, it is imperative that leaders use inclusive conversational practices to recognize the valuable

contributions of the members within the organization in an effort to increase satisfaction, engagement, productivity, and performance.

Intentionality

Whatever words we utter should be chosen with care for people will hear them and be influenced by them.

—Buddha, 530 BCE

Groysberg and Slind's fourth element of conversational leadership is intentionality. The definition of intentionality in this study is ensuring clarity of purpose that includes goals and direction to create order and meaning with the use of conversation (Barge, 1985; Groysberg & Slind, 2012; Men, 2012). The idea behind intentional conversation is that there is a goal in mind for the conversation. Although this is the fourth element of conversational leadership, it varies slightly from the objective of the other three elements that precede it: intimacy, interactivity, and inclusion. The first three elements are designed to use conversation to build relationships, provide shared meaning, and allow for all members to contribute. However, intentionality provides focus and direction to the previous three elements so there is a way to close the loop and take action (Groysberg & Slind, 2012). In fact, experts Berson and Stieglitz (2013) suggested, "The purpose of building relationships, developing others, and making decisions is to set up the stage for effective action, because at the end of the day, only action produces results" (p. 197). Therefore, intentional conversations are necessary in preparation for making decisions and taking action within the organization.

Although Groysberg and Slind (2012) proposed that leaders be intentional with the planning and anticipated goals of their conversations, they also stated that that differs

completely from trying to control the conversation itself (p. 179). For example, controlling the conversation is about limiting the dynamic back-and-forth interaction whereas planning a strategic conversation is about bringing specific topics to the conversation in anticipation of an outcome. However, that anticipated outcome is not a guarantee and an adept leader needs to be flexible in how the conversation takes shape with input from members. The leader would be wise to prepare for unexpected developments that occur through an interactive dialogue. Such anticipation can assist the leader in choosing words and phrases that can redirect or reframe the conversation so the outcome is still reflective of organizational goals. Furthermore, if the conversation goes awry, a great leader can use the details contained in that conversation to fuel further inquiry as to the reasons anticipated outcomes were met or unmet. The results of such an inquiry can lead to difficult or critical conversations that are necessary for organizational growth or change (Noonin, 2012; Zimmerman, 1991). A great deal of intentional conversation is about sharing the mission, vision, and goals of the organization so that each organizational member is on the same page. In fact, employees feel more confident when they not only know the company's strategies or goals, but also understand the "whys" behind it. Weber (2013) described great conversational leaders as ones who will explain what they are thinking and why rather than just stating their position. The author suggested that employees are more likely to back the leader's position, even if it varies from their own, if they understand its origins. Thus, it is the leader's responsibility to provide clarification by explaining goals and objectives so employees can derive purpose from the work they are doing. While explaining goals and objectives, Groysberg and Slind (2012) recommended that leaders clearly articulate the logic behind them. Feltz

(2009) furthered Groysberg and Slind's recommendation by stating that it is only when leaders are intentional and every action, behavior, and decision is clearly defined by an outcome that each employee will have a clear understanding of the organization's goals, purpose, expectations, and needs. When employees come to this understanding, they are more likely to gain insight into their own workplace purpose and will be motivated to meet the needs of the organization. Mautz (2015) proposed that it is the leader's responsibility to provide meaning to employees by demonstrating how they fit within the mission and goals of the organization. Therefore, being intentional is about having conversations that are strategic in nature, which provides a platform for buy-in and engagement from followers.

Leaders who practice being intentional prepare for conversations with organizational members using much forethought. Harrison and Mühlberg (2014) asserted that leadership is given power through a leader's ability to communicate strategically and subsequently producing results required for organizational success. Therefore, their conversations need to be well thought-out, developed, structured, and strategic. They should not be haphazard or aimless. Moreover, intentional conversations should not be a simple sharing of information from leader to employee; rather, it must be an interactive dialogue that covers key issues, goals, obstacles, new ideas, expectations as well as current and future states of the organization (Berson & Stieglitz, 2013; Harrison & Mühlberg, 2014; Weber, 2013). There are three important aspects in having strategic conversations: all organizational members need to understand where the company is going, why the company is going there, and how the company will get there (Groysberg & Slind, 2012). In order for leaders to use intentional conversations to instill the above

aspects, they must understand their organizations' available resources and any constraints that may be present. Therefore, Groysberg and Slind (2012) recommended that leaders conduct a communication audit so they can develop conversational strategies that align with the way their organizational members think and behave. A communication audit can also demonstrate which communication practices are working and which are faulty so appropriate changes can be made. Sharing the results of the communication audit with organizational members and inviting their feedback can be a conduit for employees engaging in the improvement of their organization's communication practices.

It is important for these intentional strategic conversations to occur regularly and consistently. This will allow for adjustments to be made to conversation content as changes to external and internal factors necessitate. Furthermore, these conversations must include everyone so that each employee, no matter his or her role, develops personal goals that meet and further the objectives of the organization. Barge et al. (1989) concluded that strategic leaders have an obligation to help employees make sense of organizational goals and to motivate them to take ownership in achieving them. Many experts argue that the act of carefully planning the content and strategies of leadership conversations prior to having them will assist employees in making sense of shared information and will inspire them to take personal responsibility for their own contributions (Barge et al., 1989; Marti, Gil, & Barrasa, 2009; Nichols, 2012; Ozlati, 2012). Employees are also more likely to take ownership of their duties and roles within the organization if leaders provide them with some sense of autonomy. For example, several experts proposed that if employees just merely follow commands, then they are unlikely to use critical thinking skills or judgments to problem solve appropriately

(Berson & Stieglitz, 2013; Groysberg & Slind, 2012; Kouzes & Posner, 2006; Ozlati, 2012). It is through intentional conversations centered on organizational goals and employees' skills or capabilities that the leader can encourage such autonomy.

As discussed above, intentional conversations are intended to bring about action by providing organizational members clarity and direction for organizational goals. There is another reason to have these strategic conversations, and that is to find workplace meaning and purpose for organizational members. As a result, employees often discover purpose and meaning through the clarity of goals. The research is also consistent in asserting that 21st-century employees do not want to perform duties just because these duties are expected of them. They also want to derive purpose from the work that they do, and this may not be found in their duties alone but also in the relationships, camaraderie, recognition, and achievement they experience while performing these duties (Berson & Stieglitz, 2013; Crowley, 2011, Mautz, 2015). Therefore, leaders should share their vision for the organization and use conversation with members to gather feedback so that a shared vision can emerge. Having a shared vision allows members to share a purpose and provides a pathway to engagement and positive workplace behaviors. In a study searching for predictors of workplace behaviors conducted by Ozlati (2012), results indicated that employee attitudes about knowledge sharing and participation are intrinsically motivated through reciprocal workplace relationships. Daft (2010) furthered this idea by stating that most leaders have a struggle between their habits and their intentions when it comes to their leadership practices. He went on to propose that great leaders are different from most because they are able to use intentional strategies to cultivate positive workplace behaviors in others. Therefore, an

additional goal of intentional conversation is to provide an avenue for the development of shared meaning through reciprocal relationships that foster motivation for positive workplace behaviors.

Another facet of intentional conversation is organizational storytelling. Groysberg and Slind (2012) explained organizational storytelling as all members having a unified view of the organization; that is, that there is a common company narrative. In order to have a single company story emerge, leaders need to engage members in an intentional conversation that centers on developing this story. This story is often one about company purpose and framing that purpose in a way that all members feel connected to it and are motivated in sharing that same story (Bartels, 2017; Mautz, 2015). Furthermore, there are numerous strategies that company leaders can use to garner employee input in developing the organizational story. Groysberg and Slind (2012) provided examples of questions that exemplary leaders may pose to employees so a single story may present itself. For example, asking a question such as, "Why do people choose to do business with us as opposed to someone else?" can lead to answers that really define the qualities and characteristics of the organization. Another way to elicit these responses is through meetings where the company story is placed on the agenda and conversations revolve around the past, present, and future trajectories of the company. By doing this, a company identity and brand can develop through a shared dialogue. Moreover, when employees are involved in creating that story, they are more likely to perceive its value and share it with others. Finally, when all members of an organization, from leadership, to employees, to customers, share and repeat the same story, it strategically creates a bond between the company story and its members.

Although the goal of conversational intentionality is to provide clarity, direction, and meaning among organizational members, it cannot stand alone to be effective. It must be used in concert with the other three elements of conversational leadership to be truly effective. Therefore, it is important to note that all four elements of conversational leadership must be present and are necessary for leaders to exhibit exemplary conversational leadership skills with the members of their organization(s).

Community College Presidents

Community colleges have a long history of development. The first of its kind are over a century old and were originally labeled junior colleges (Toner, 2016). They are known as *the* 2-year college and offer a variety of academic programs that can result in credits earned toward an AA/AS degree or units for transfer to a 4-year college or university. Community colleges also offer a variety of career technical programs for individuals who desire to learn a skill or trade necessary to obtain employment in a specific field. Some community colleges have begun to offer bachelor's degrees for specialized majors though this is relatively uncommon. No matter, community colleges still educate nearly half of all postsecondary students and are the largest organization of higher education (Toner, 2016, p. 13). In addition, the American Association of Community Colleges (AACC) estimates that 7.3 million undergraduate students are enrolled in community colleges. As a result, the California Community Colleges Chancellor's Office (CCCCO, n.d.) proposes that the millions of students attending a community college carry the potential of graduating, transferring, and becoming part of our nationwide workforce. California has more community colleges than any other state, and there are currently 114 of them (CCCCO, n.d.). Each one of these community

colleges in California employs a president as the leader, and this person is responsible for the outcomes of college staff, faculty, and the students who are enrolled. Therefore, a community college president's leadership capabilities have profound impacts on California communities and their workforce.

President's Role in Leadership

It is postulated that the viability of a community college is determined by leadership efficacy (D'Aloia, 1984). Since the community college president is the chief leader in the hierarchy of community college administration, it is important to explore his or her role and practices as leader. Furthermore, the courses, programs, and activities of community college campuses are evolving and expanding, especially due to technological advancements that have created new professions and demand that employees be trained through accredited community college programs (Toner, 2016). It is expected the enrollment trends in California community colleges may increase as new programs are developed. As a result, there is a great need to understand the behaviors and practices necessary to lead a community college successfully.

First, it is important to know what constitutes success within a community college though it is multifaceted and continues to evolve based on state and federal guidelines. For example, the U.S. Department of Education developed a student success committee in 2008 with the sole purpose of defining community college success measures. It is through the committee's work along with input from the American Association of Community College's Voluntary Framework of Accountability (VFA) committee that the current strategies being used to measure community college success were devised: (a) student progress and persistence; (b) workforce, economic, and community

development; and (c) student learning. Furthermore, some of these measures also include

student progress in reaching a defined threshold of earned credits, the percentage of

graduates who passed licensure examinations, or the wage growth of graduates (AACC,

n.d.). There are also measurements from the state that gauge the mere number of students

enrolled full-time, resulting in apportionment funding based on the full-time equivalent

student (FTES) rates at each community college. Community colleges are also funded

based on a faculty obligation number (FON), which was instituted in 1989 and is

burdensome to many community colleges but also ties into student success measures.

Moreover, there are new state regulations and success measures pertaining to diversity

and equity that community colleges must meet in order to receive funding. Therefore, the

community college president is responsible for meeting all of the above college success

measures. As a result, he or she must be capable of galvanizing all staff and faculty to

ensure compliance and quality performance.

Some colleges have greater success rates than other colleges, and McMurray

(2010) attributed this to the correlation between college leadership and the levels of

employee engagement, productivity, and student success. The community college

president oversees all campus administration, faculty, classified staff, community

partners, and students, so he or she must be adept at communicating and building a

trusting and transparent environment (McMurray, 2010). In fact, the AACC developed

six competencies for effective leadership by a community college president:

organizational strategy, resource management, communication, collaboration, advocacy,

and professionalism (McNair, 2015). Other valuable leadership characteristics include

honesty, truthfulness, forthrightness, and trustworthiness as vital for effective leaders of

academic institutions (McMurray, 2010). In order for community college presidents to successfully lead their organizations, they must develop the leadership characteristics that are deemed important.

Bowman (2014) contended that success in academic institutions is based on the conversational strategies used by leadership and these strategies should result in collective purpose and direction for the campus community. He also asserted that conversationally adept leaders will initiate conversations to set the tone and encourage open and inclusive dialogue with all college constituents. Former Pierce Community College President Rocky Young (2013) described in his book, *A Walk Through Leadership*, the importance of leadership conversations with faculty and staff. Young insisted that all new and innovative ideas come from an interactive dialogue and the president must master the art of a conversation. In addition, the author maintained that the president should think ahead before introducing topics of conversation and have a trusting relationship with his audience. He also suggested that college presidents must be authentic listeners who demonstrate that they derive value from the input received while also maintaining responsibility for bringing clarity, strategy, and direction to the conversation.

Boggs and McPhail (2016), both former community college presidents, discussed the importance of presidents developing the necessary competencies to lead their organizations. They proposed that these competencies are developed through skill sets and personality traits, but most are learned through experience. In addition, they urged community college presidents to get close with their employees by sharing personal stories and being earnest in their interest. It is suggested that community college

presidents must create a strong cohesive organizational foundation by being transparent

and authentic, so trusting relationships can be built. As a result, Boggs and McPhail

(2016) encouraged presidents to lead the way for social integration at their college

campuses as part of their overall strategy. Other experts agree, proposing that

community college presidents are responsible for cultivating trusting, inclusive

relationships on campus and in the community so that all members work creatively and

enthusiastically together to achieve the goals of the institution (McMurray, 2010;

McNair, 2015; Young 2013). However, in the book, *Redesigning America's Community*

Colleges, coauthors Bailey, Jaggars, and Jenkins (2015) stated that the large majority of

college faculty, staff, and students are disconnected from institutional discussion and

decision making. They implied that there is often a divide between administrative bodies

and other bodies within the organization due to poor modeling of these inclusive and

collaborative relationships by leadership. Moreover, it is through the processes and

systems intentionally developed by the administration that provide the opportunities for

college personnel to connect with one another and to work together on problems or goals

of mutual concern. In fact, it is the president's responsibility to converse with all

constituents to establish common goals and purpose and then to provide a platform for

engagement to occur.

     Since community college presidents have such an impact on millions of students,

faculty, staff, and community members, it is imperative that these leaders use their

conversational skills intentionally to create meaningful interactive and inclusive

relationships that will fuel the strategic goals and successes of the organization. As a

result, this study examined the conversational practices and behaviors that exemplary community college presidents use to lead their organizations successfully.

Summary

The literature has provided much evidence through research and theory that communication practices are essential to the success and sustainability of an organization (D. Anderson, 2015; Groysberg & Slind, 2012; Gurteen, 2015; Cobley & Schulz, 2013; Scott, 2004; Van der Voet et al., 2014; Weibler, & Rohn-Endres, 2010; Willenberg, 2014). In addition, numerous experts agree that developing conversational competence is significant as a leadership strategy (Glaser, 2014; Kegan & Lahey, 2001; Patterson et al., 2012; Weber, 2013). However, the literature has also indicated that results of the digital age and globalization have led to organizations conversing less while also experiencing alarming rates of disengagement and dissatisfaction from its workforce (Crowley, 2011, Mautz, 2015; Przybylski, & Weinstein, 2012; Stephens & Barrett, 2016; Zhao, 2009). Therefore, furthering this research by exploring the conversational behaviors of exemplary leaders can have profound impacts on leadership strategies, the satisfaction of employees, and organizational success. Furthermore, by examining these leadership behaviors in superior community college presidents, these proposed impacts can affect the millions of people employed by or attending community colleges (Awan, 2014; Babu, 2016; Bailey et al., 2015; CCCCO, n.d.; Toner, 2016).

CHAPTER III: METHODOLOGY

Overview

This research study used Groysberg and Slind's (2012) conversational leadership elements (intimacy, interactivity, inclusion, and intentionality) to examine how exemplary community college presidents use these elements to lead their organizations. The purpose of the study, the research questions, and the population and sample size are all indicated to offer further clarity and focus to the study. In addition, the methodology chapter explains why the qualitative method was an appropriate choice and provides a rationale for using the phenomenological approach in the design of this study. This chapter also includes the instruments used in the study as well as how the data were derived and analyzed from those instruments. Finally, the limitations are discussed.

Purpose Statement

The purpose of this phenomenological research study was to describe the behaviors that exemplary community college presidents practice to lead their organizations through conversation as depicted by Groysberg and Slind's (2012) four elements of conversational leadership: intimacy, interactivity, inclusion, and intentionality.

Research Questions

Central Question

What are the behaviors that exemplary community college presidents practice to lead their organizations through conversation using Groysberg and Slind's four elements of conversational leadership: intimacy, interactivity, inclusion, and intentionality?

Subquestions

1. How do exemplary community college presidents lead their organizations through the conversation element of intimacy?

2. How do exemplary community college presidents lead their organizations through the conversation element of interactivity?

3. How do exemplary community college presidents lead their organizations through the conversation element of inclusion?

4. How do exemplary community college presidents lead their organizations through the conversation element of intentionality?

Research Design

A research design indicates a general plan and acts as the structural foundation for conducting the study (McMillan & Schumacher, 2010). It is critical that a researcher choose an appropriate research design. As a result, McMillan and Schumacher (2010) identified four categories of research design that are commonly used: quantitative, qualitative, mixed method, and analytic. Quantitative research involves numbers or quantities, which results in raw or statistical data, while qualitative research is comprised of words that develop into trends or themes (Patton, 2015). A mixed-method design occurs when both quantitative and qualitative measures are used to originate and analyze the data. Alternatively, in an analytic study, the researcher "identifies, studies, and synthesizes" the data from documents (McMillan & Schumacher, 2010, p. 24).

After carefully comparing the emphasis of each design category, it was determined that a qualitative research design would provide data that aligned with the purpose of this study. Qualitative design allows the researcher to derive greater meaning

from the data based on their own expertise, experience, and personal observation of the participants (Patton, 2015). Therefore, the researcher also becomes an instrument for this study. In addition, as Roberts (2010) explained in her book, *The Dissertation Journey*, a qualitative design is best chosen when the researcher aims to uncover "what lies behind any phenomena about which they know very little" (p. 143). Since conversational leadership is still in its infancy and the conversational practices of exemplary community college presidents is basically unknown, a qualitative design is deemed the most appropriate.

In qualitative design, the researcher uses inductive analysis through observations and interviews, which varies from quantitative design and its use of deductive analysis by using experimental methods and standardized measures (Patton, 2015; Roberts, 2010). Therefore, the data gathered in a qualitative design are often based on words, phrases, and behaviors that can be logged and coded for themes. As a result, it is common to use a smaller sample size in a qualitative design because of the length of time required to gather and analyze this type of data (Patten, 2012). Unlike quantitative design, which often uses large sample sizes whose participants are randomly selected, a qualitative design often relies on purposeful sampling to ensure participants meet specific criteria that has been developed beforehand and is based on the intent of the study (Patten, 2012).

Phenomenological Approach and Rationale

After discerning that a qualitative design would yield the type of data needed to derive a deeper understanding of the conversational practices used by community college presidents, it was equally important to determine which research genre within qualitative design would be most appropriate. For example, there are numerous theoretical

approaches to qualitative design that have varying characteristics. Some of these approaches are as follows: ethnography, autoethnography, grounded theory, realism, phenomenology, heuristic inquiry, social constructivism, narrative, systems theory, and pragmatism (McMillan & Schumacher, 2010; Patton, 2015). Each of these approaches has its benefits, but after careful consideration and collaboration by a thematic research group of peers studying conversational leadership within various organizations, the phenomenological approach was determined most appropriate for this topic of study. The phenomenological approach is used as a method to assist in providing data that answer the research questions developed for the study by requiring the researcher to be careful and thorough in capturing and recounting the lived experiences of participants through in-depth interviews (Bamberger, Rugh, & Mabry, 2012; McMillan & Schumacher, 2010). As a result, for the purpose of this study, interview questions were aimed at gaining an understanding of how community college presidents perceive, feel, describe, understand, make sense of, and discuss their experiences as related to their use of the conversational leadership elements depicted by Groysberg and Slind (2012). The interviews with exemplary community college presidents were conducted in person or with the use of technology (video conferencing or audio conferencing), between the subject and the researcher. This interaction allowed the researcher to adjust the wording and order of questions if needed, maintain rapport, preserve focus, and assess subjects' answers to determine whether follow-up questions were needed for additional probing (Bamberger et al., 2012). Furthermore, choosing a qualitative design with the phenomenological approach supported the overall intent of the study, which was to explore the use of conversation elements by exemplary community college presidents,

and this was best accomplished through having an interactive dialogue between the researcher and the participant through in-depth interviews (Patten, 2012).

Population

The population is a term used in research design to identify a group of individuals, objects, or events that meet specific criteria and can be generalized (McMillan & Schumacher, 2010). Although community college presidents are the anticipated population for this study, there are community colleges all throughout the United States and in other countries, such as Israel, France, and Japan, so it is difficult to ascertain the exact number of community college presidents worldwide (Redden, 2010). In addition, though some countries have mimicked the community college system after those in the United States, they are still developing and may not have the same administrative structure and therefore cannot be generalized, so they need to be excluded from the intended population. Thus, the population for this study was narrowed to the 1,462 U.S. community college presidents who currently preside over community colleges (U.S. Department of Education, 2017).

Target Population

Patten (2012) stated that in qualitative design, it is often impractical to study an entire population because of size, time, geographical location, and other elements that make gathering data difficult. Therefore, reducing the size of the population by using specific shared characteristics is necessary. As a result, the target population is much like the overall population except it is narrowed by the common traits or characteristics shared among persons in the population (McMillan & Schumacher, 2010). Consequently, identifying community college presidents working within the California

community college system aligns with the description of sharing common traits or characteristics. All community colleges in California must adhere to California Education Code, state regulations specific to California community colleges, and mandates received from the state chancellor and its governing board. Therefore, these institutions share a common mission and administrative structure, which translates to the common roles and duties shared by community college presidents.

When the desired common traits for the population are examined, it reduces the size of the population further and results in the target population. According to data gathered from the California Community Colleges Chancellor's Office (CCCCO, n.d.), the target population for this study is the 114 community colleges located in California, all of which have presidents acting as the chief executive operating administrator.

Sample

When a population is too large to be studied in a qualitative design, a narrowed group of individuals become the sample population from whom the data are collected and generalized back to the larger population (McMillan & Schumacher, 2010). A way to narrow the population is to include delimiting variables so the scope of the population is not as broad. As a result, this study's use of exemplary was defined and used as a delimiting variable. For instance, exemplary was theoretically defined as someone set apart from peers in a supreme manner, suitable behavior, principles, or intentions that can be copied (Goodwin et al., 2014). In addition and for purposes of this study, the term, exemplary presidents, was operationally defined as those community college presidents who are set apart from peers by exhibiting at least four of the following characteristics: (a) evidence of successful relationships with followers (i.e., faculty, classified staff,

community partners and students); (b) evidence of leading the campus successfully;

(c) a minimum of 5 years of experience in the profession; (d) articles, papers, or materials

written, published, or presented at conferences or association meetings; (e) recognized by

their peers; or (f) membership in professional associations within their field. It is by

using this operational definition of exemplary community college presidents, that the

sample population begins to take shape by having much narrower parameters in its

application.

This "narrowed population is the survey population or sampling frame"

(McMillan & Schumacher, 2010, p. 129). Therefore, after applying the delimitations to

the target population and discerning which of the 114 California community college

presidents met the criteria for exemplary, the size of potential participants was reduced

significantly. Furthermore, the researcher also had to take into consideration the use of

the phenomenological approach, whereby the appropriate sample size is estimated

between six to 10 participants (Patton, 2015). After applying these parameters, the

sample population for this study consisted of 10 exemplary community college presidents

located in Southern California. Again, the number of participants is smaller in qualitative

inquiry as the instruments used in the design are often more complex, and the data can

take a longer time to collect and analyze (Patten, 2012).

Since the nature of this study commanded a narrowed participation pool, it was

imperative to choose participants intentionally that would illuminate the questions under

study. As a result, the researcher chose to use nonprobability sampling, which varies

from probability sampling because it does not use any type of random selection from a

population (McMillan & Schumacher, 2010). Rather, nonprobability sampling uses

subjects who have similar characteristics and are accessible to the researcher. Therefore, this study used nonprobability, convenience, and purposeful sampling to select the sample population.

For example, the researcher used convenience sampling to ascertain which of the potential subjects was most accessible to the researcher. McMillan and Schumacher (2010) explained that using convenience sampling considers the subjects' accessibility, and availability. As a result, convenience sampling ensured the researcher's ability to interview exemplary community college presidents based on their geographical location and their availability to participate in face-to face or audio-conference interviews. Since the researcher is located in Southern California, choosing community college presidents from this geographical area was most advantageous for any of the face-to-face interviews. Therefore, community colleges located within a 5-hour driving distance from the researcher were used for the purpose of this study. In addition, combining convenience sampling with purposeful sampling allowed the researcher to choose not only accessible but also qualified subjects, based on selective criteria, who could add to the richness of information gathered for the purposes of the study (Patten, 2012; Patton, 2015). Patten (2012) explained that after the research topic of the study is solid, it is the researcher's responsibility when using purposeful sampling to identify individuals who are likely to have the most relevant of information pertaining to the topic. As a result, purposeful sampling makes use of the delimiting variable by focusing on subjects who meet the criteria of exemplary. Though convenience and purposeful sampling are considered nonprobability sampling and do not give all of the individuals in the total population equal chances of being selected, they do narrow the population to increase the

likelihood that the individuals selected will participate and bring meaningful information that aligns to the purpose of the study (McMillan & Schumacher, 2010).

After the researcher discerned the composition of the sample population and Brandman University's Institutional Review Board (BUIRB) approved the study proposal, the Community College League of California (CCLC) directory was used, in consultation with a former California community college president and CCLC member, as a means to gain information pertaining to the names associated with former and current presiding presidents of California community colleges and delineating by those who met the exemplary criterion. As a result, 10 exemplary community college presidents were identified and invited to participate in this study in the quest to illuminate the experiences of exemplary community college presidents who successfully lead their organizations by using conversational leadership strategies.

Instrumentation

This study utilized a qualitative design with a phenomenological approach. Qualitative research was defined by McMillan and Schumacher (2010) as an "in-depth study using face-to-face or observation techniques to collect data from people in their natural settings" (p. 489). The phenomenological approach is designed to explore the individual and shared human experiences of a phenomenon using the techniques of qualitative design (Patton, 2015). In addition, the researcher should be able to describe and interpret the experiences of participants in order to ascribe meaning to the phenomenon (McMillan & Schumacher, 2010). Therefore, conducting in-depth, semistructured interviews with the participants who have experienced this phenomenon is a way to gather data so the researcher is able to illuminate the nature of these

experiences. McMillan and Schumacher (2010) explained, "In-depth interviews use open-ended response questions to obtain data on participants' meanings" (p. 355). In addition, while using the phenomenological perspective, researchers rely on the interview guide approach by developing a semistructured interview technique that allows the researcher to ask predetermined questions with flexibility to ask additional probing questions that ensure that the meanings of participant responses are captured accurately. Again, the probing questions must also be open ended and used to increase comprehensiveness (McMillan & Schumacher, 2010; Patten, 2012). Therefore, the interview questions were designed in a manner that could capture the experiences of exemplary community college presidents who practice leading their organizations through Groysberg and Slind's (2012) four elements of conversational leadership: intimacy, interactivity, inclusion, and intentionality. In order to design such an interview, 12 peer researchers of a thematic dissertation team collaborated with faculty experts by using the agreed upon definitions of the variables to guide the development of questions.

Interview Design

Designing the proper interview is essential in gathering appropriate data for the study. Therefore, 12 peer researchers were divided into groups of three, and each group was charged with the task of developing three questions for one of the four variables (intimacy, interactivity, inclusion, and intentionality). Groups were instructed to use their assigned variable, literature sources, and the theoretical definition to design their proposed questions. After accomplishing this task, each group gathered collectively at a meeting with faculty experts, and the group members and the faculty all provided input for revisions to these questions with the goal of selecting the most appropriate questions

for the interview. The team discussed such things as definitions, appropriate terms, clarity of content, alignment with the literature, placement and sequencing of questions, and interview protocols. It was important to refrain from the use of dichotomous-response questions (questions that result in yes/no answers) as this type of questioning does not produce enough information to gather phenomenological data and often results in an interrogative tone rather than one that is conversational (McMillan & Schumacher, 2010). Using this team collaboration and established guidelines, a total of 12 questions were developed, discussed, edited, and then agreed upon by members of the thematic team (Appendix A). Additional probing questions were also developed and could be used to elicit clarification of information needed by the researcher (Appendix B).

Field-Test

Once the interview questions were completed and interview protocols developed and agreed upon, each of the 12 researchers from the thematic team performed a field-test with someone identified from their target population, but one who would not be included in their sample population. Therefore, the information and data collected in the field-test would not be included in the final study. As a result, and for the purposes of this study, a field-test interview was performed with a community college president. The participant was given a brief description of the study, an informed consent form (Appendix C), the Brandman bill of rights (Appendix D), and a preview of the interview questions via e-mail a week prior to the actual interview. In addition, an expert observer was invited to attend the interview to provide feedback for the researcher at the conclusion of the interview. The interview occurred at the campus and office of the president. The president, the researcher, and the expert observer were present.

The field-test interview began with requesting permission to record the interview as well as introductions, collection of the signed informed consent form (Appendix C), and an inquiry to see whether the participant had any questions regarding the process. The thematic interview protocol was read aloud by the researcher before beginning the interview. The researcher read each variable and its definition aloud before proceeding to ask each question. The participant was also given a hard copy of the interview questions to refer to during the interview (Appendix A). At the conclusion of the interview, the researcher asked the participant questions that were included on the field-test participant feedback form (Appendix E). In addition, the observer was also provided a form to elicit feedback about the process of the interview, the content of questions, and the behaviors and mannerism displayed by the researcher (Appendix F). Finally, the feedback responses recorded between the participant, the observer, and the researcher were compiled and shared with other members of the thematic team and faculty experts during a subsequent meeting. The results of 12 field-tests conducted by all thematic members were discussed, synthesized, and revisions to the instrument were made in agreement. After perfecting and finalizing the instrument, the researcher could reasonably proceed to interview the participant identified as part of the field study. By sharing and discussing the field-test results, thematic members were able to demonstrate validity within the design of the interview instrument.

Validity

Validity is a term in research that is used to convey the credibility of the study. Roberts (2010) concluded that validity in qualitative research is about discerning the degree to which the instrument used in the study truly measures what it claims to

measure. Validity can also represent the accuracy of the conclusions of the study or outcome data. For example, validity was described by Creswell and Miller (2000) as "how accurately the account represents participants' realities of the social phenomenon and is credible to them" (p. 124). As a result, there are strategies used within a study to assess its validity and to ensure assessment tools and instruments measure what they intend to, which then allows the researcher to make accurate references to the findings. For instance, confirming participants' accounts with them through their transcribed interviews, independent expert examination, peer collaboration, or using triangulation methods can ensure validity occurs within a study.

Content Validity

McMillan and Schumacher (2010) described content validity as having evidence that demonstrates that the questions used in the interview are representative of the intentions of the study. They also explained that this type of evidence is usually gathered by having experts examine the content of the instrument and the degree to which that content measures the criteria and objectives outlined in the study. Since the researcher is also an instrument of the study, his or her behaviors, mannerisms, and interview skills must also be assessed to accurately measure the delivery of interview content. As a result, content validity was examined in this study by having 12 peer researchers and faculty experts develop and refine the interview questions through a collaborative process. In addition, all of the 12 peer researchers implemented a field-test to pilot the instrument with an interview participant and observer appropriate to their study. At the conclusion of each interview, interview questions and content feedback were requested and collected from each participant and observer so it could be shared and analyzed

between the thematic group members and faculty experts. The information collected was used to edit and refine interview questions to ensure they were measuring what was intended. In addition, since the researcher is an instrument of the study, feedback was also requested from participant and observer to ascertain the interview skill set of the researcher so further refinements could be made if necessary.

Reliability

Reliability in a qualitative research study refers to the consistency and repeatability of the study. For example, Roberts (2010) explained reliability as the "degree to which the instrument consistently measures something from one time to another" (p. 151). Moreover, numerous experts agree that reliability is dependent on consistency in how the data are collected and analyzed in qualitative research (Golafshani, 2003; McMillan & Schumacher, 2010; Patton, 2015; Roberts, 2010). Merriam and Tisdell (2016) insisted that the most important criteria to assess for reliability in a qualitative design is to discern whether the results are consistent with the data collected. Golafshani (2003) identified "three types of reliability referred to in qualitative research, which relate to: (1) the degree to which a measurement, given repeatedly, remains the same (2) the stability of a measurement over time; and (3) the similarity of measurements within a given time period" (p. 598). Therefore, reliability is concerned with the consistency, stability, and repeatability of the participant's responses as well as the ability of the researcher to collect, record, and analyze information proficiently.

Internal Reliability of Data

Internal reliability is assessed when more than one researcher derives the same conclusions from the data. McMillan & Schumacher (2010) explained that the use of triangulation increases internal reliability as multiple researchers, theories, or perspectives are used to interpret the data. Merriam and Tisdell (2016) also discussed the importance of triangulation and insisted it is crucial to internal reliability. These authors concluded that using multiple methods of data collection is an efficient and dependable technique to ensure triangulation. As a result, this study used both multiple researchers and multiple methods of data collection to increase its internal reliability. For example, this study was conducted in collaboration with a thematic dissertation team consisting of 12 peer researchers who studied the same phenomenon of conversational leadership. The team shared the same purpose, the same research questions, and the same instrument to collect data. As a result, the thematic team was able to discuss key findings from multiple perspectives, which was used as a method of triangulation. Furthermore, this study used multiple methods to collect data, such as artifacts and observations, which can be used to compare and cross check the data derived from participant interviews. Therefore, artifacts were collected as a way to demonstrate institutional collaboration. The artifacts gathered by the researcher were documents containing meeting minutes, social media discussions, and memos that aligned with the participants' interview data (McMillan & Schumacher, 2010). Finally, the researcher also conducted independent observations of participants to compare to the data collected during interviews and the data gathered through artifacts. These aforementioned methods of triangulation increase the dependability, consistency, and reliability of the study. Merriam and Tisdell (2016)

proposed that when triangulation occurs, it increases credibility by "countering any

concern that a study's findings are simply an artifact, of a single method, a single source,

or a single investigator's blinders" (p. 245).

External Reliability of Data

External reliability is apparent when consistent results occur each time the study

is replicated by other researchers (Patton, 2015). However, a qualitative

phenomenological research design is aimed at illuminating the experiences of a limited

number of subjects, which makes it more difficult to replicate. Since the data are based

on human experience as perceived by participants and the interpretation of that

experience by the researcher, it is challenging to repeat those exact circumstances in a

subsequent study. As a result, external reliability was not a significant factor to consider

for this research study.

Intercoder Reliability

Intercoder reliability refers to the degree of agreement between two or more

independent researchers as to the application and process applied for coding themes used

within the study (Patton, 2015). Since the topic of conversational leadership is being

studied by 12 peers in a thematic group who share the same purpose statement, research

questions, and research design, there were numerous opportunities to share information

and perspectives as it related to the application and processes for coding themes. As a

result, procedures were established for identifying themes as well as for the categorizing

and coding of the data. In addition, an independent peer researcher reviewed 10% of the

coding data with a standard agreement of 80%. The process of having a peer researcher

analyze the coding data increases intercoder reliability, which is a critical aspect of

qualitative design and was crucial to the overall reliability of this study.

Data Collection

The data collected for this study were based on the face-to-face interviews

conducted with 10 exemplary community college presidents. The recorded interviews

were contained on the researcher's personal electronic devices and were password

protected. All transcripts resulting from the recordings and any notes taken during the

interview were stored in a locked cabinet at the researcher's residence. Furthermore, all

informed consent forms collected from each study participant were kept in unison with

the other confidential documents and stored in a locked cabinet. Data collection began

after approval was granted from Brandman University's Institutional Review Board

(BUIRB) and once the researcher completed the National Institutes of Health (NIH)

certification in protecting human research participants who were used in this study

(Appendix G).

Interview Process

After solidifying the semistructured interview instrument and protocol with the

thematic research team, the researcher conducted 10 interviews with community college

presidents. Six interviews were done face to face between the researcher and the

president. All face-to-face interviews were conducted at the office locale of the president

being interviewed. Four of the interviews were conducted between the researcher and the

president via audio-conference call. After introductions, collection of the signed

informed consent form, and an explanation of interview protocol, the researcher asked a

series of 12 open-ended questions in a semistructured interview format. There were three

questions indicated for each variable, and the definition of the variable was read prior to the questions being asked. The researcher also asked probing questions when deemed appropriate. McMillan and Schumacher (2010) encouraged the use of probing questions to provide further clarity to the subject and comprehension of responses for the researcher. The researcher took notes to highlight any nonverbal cues that would further illuminate participants' responses but remained attentive to the participant throughout. The entirety of the interview was recorded and later submitted to a confidential transcribing service. Each participant was identified through a unique code to ensure confidentiality. Once the transcriptions were received by the researcher, patterns and themes of interview responses were input using NVIVO software so commonalities could be noted and coded for interpretation and analysis.

Data Analysis

Data analysis occurred after compiling the transcripts from the interviews of all 10 community college presidents and the researcher's notes pertaining to observations and artifacts. Prior to analyzing the compilation of data, the researcher requested that each interview participant read the transcript of their interview and provide feedback as to the accuracy of the transcription. This feedback was also used to analyze the data and ensure triangulation. In respects to qualitative design, Roberts (2010) explained that the researcher must become immersed in the data by rereading the interview transcripts and notes many times to enable clear and emergent categories, themes, and patterns. As a result, after the researcher thoroughly reviewed the transcripts and notes, a comprehensive matrix was developed using NVIVO software so that common themes could be viewed and categorized more easily. In addition, specific themes related to

Groysberg and Slind's (2012) conversational leadership variables (intimacy, interactivity, inclusion, and intentionality) were coded and evaluated for frequency. Once frequency was established and like codes were consolidated, meaningful themes emerged from the data. The researcher was also able to compare codes and themes with thematic team members to ensure consistency.

Limitations

Limitations of a study can lessen the ability to make generalizations that generate from the results. However, this particular study on conversational leadership was completed by 12 peer researchers in a variety of organizational settings, which added to the validity of the research. In addition, triangulation and reliability measures were taken to enhance the trustworthiness and consistency of the study. Nevertheless, this researcher recognizes that there are several limitations that could affect the results of this study. These limitations include geographical considerations, sample size, and the researcher as an instrument of the study.

Geographical Considerations

There are 114 community colleges within California that range in locations throughout the state. As a result, in the wide variance of geographical locations, the researcher chose to narrow these considerations to a five-hour drive distance from the researcher's geographical location. In addition, since the aim of the researcher was to conduct these interviews in a face-to-face capacity, traveling far distances would place a monetary strain as well as time constraints on the researcher. Taking this development into consideration translates to a very limited pool of potential participants based on their

geographical location. As a result, communication technology was used to interview participants in some cases where travel was not favorable.

Sample Size

As a result of using purposeful and convenience sampling for this study and narrowing the population further due to geographical considerations, the sample size may be too small to generalize back to the general population. For instance, 10 community college presidents were interviewed and all were from Southern California, which decreased the ability to generalize to the entire population of community college presidents.

Researcher as an Instrument of the Study

The researcher in a qualitative phenomenological study is considered an instrument of the study (Patton, 2015). Though the researcher has the educational background, two decades of experience in a leadership capacity, and vast experience conducting interviews, there are always limitations when human beings are used as an instrument. Any biases or unintentional behaviors of the researcher must be taken into consideration as a limitation. However, after requested feedback from the field-test participant and observer were received, both noted the ease of the process and competence of the researcher when interviewing. As a result, the education, experience, and expert feedback for the researcher as an instrument are all used to mitigate these limitations.

<div align="center">

Summary

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A qualitative research design using a phenomenological approach was used for this study on conversational leadership. Ten exemplary community college presidents

were interviewed with the goal of illuminating their experiences as they relate to their use of the conversational leadership elements (intimacy, interactivity, inclusion, and intentionality) depicted by Groysberg and Slind (2012). The semistructured, open-ended interviews were developed and fine-tuned with the collaborative efforts of 12 peers and faculty experts. The 12 peers compose a thematic team studying the topic of conversational leadership spanning a variety of organizations. The thematic team utilized the same purpose statement, research questions, research design, and instrument, though varied populations were studied. These interviews were conducted in person or via audio-conference call between the participant and the researcher with the purpose of gaining an understanding of how community college presidents perceive, feel, describe, understand, make sense of, and discuss conversational leadership. Appropriate measures were taken to increase validity and reliability within the study. Therefore, Chapter IV follows this section and provides information on the results and outcomes pertaining to the data collected.

CHAPTER IV: RESEARCH, DATA COLLECTION, AND FINDINGS

Overview

Groysberg and Slind's four elements of conversational leadership (intimacy, interactivity, inclusion, and intentionality) were used as the foundation to explore and describe the behaviors that exemplary community college presidents practice to lead their organizations in this qualitative, phenomenological research study. Chapter IV reiterates the purpose of the study and the research questions while also providing information on the methodology and data collection procedures that were used in this study. The population, sample, and participant demographics are included as well as a detailed data analysis and a summary of key findings.

Purpose Statement

The purpose of this phenomenological research study was to describe the behaviors that exemplary community college presidents practice to lead their organizations through conversation as depicted by Groysberg and Slind's (2012) four elements of conversational leadership: intimacy, interactivity, inclusion, and intentionality.

Research Questions

There is one central research question and four subquestions used in this study. The four subquestions are intended to align with the purpose of the study, and each one is specific to one of the four elements identified within conversational leadership.

Central Research Question

What are the behaviors that exemplary community college presidents practice to lead their organizations through conversation using Groysberg and Slind's four elements of conversational leadership: intimacy, interactivity, inclusion, and intentionality?

Subquestions

1. How do exemplary community college presidents lead their organizations through the conversation element of intimacy?

2. How do exemplary community college presidents lead their organizations through the conversation element of interactivity?

3. How do exemplary community college presidents lead their organizations through the conversation element of inclusion?

4. How do exemplary community college presidents lead their organizations through the conversation element of intentionality?

Population

The population for this study was the 1,462 community college presidents who are currently in the role of chief executive operating (CEO) administrator of community colleges located within the United States (U.S. Department of Education, 2017). Since this is a large number of potential participants covering a wide geographical area, the target population was narrowed to the 114 community college presidents located throughout the state of California (CCCCO, n.d.).

Study Sample

The researcher narrowed the study population further with consideration to the phenomenological approach, in which the appropriate sample size is estimated between

six to 10 participants (Patton, 2015). In order to purposefully select a more limited number of participants, this study's use of exemplary was defined among a thematic team of 12 researchers and four expert faculty and then used as a delimiting variable to garner an appropriate study sample. For instance, exemplary was theoretically defined as someone set apart from peers in a supreme manner, suitable behavior, principles, or intentions that can be copied (Goodwin et al., 2014). In addition and for purposes of this study, the term, exemplary presidents, was operationally defined as those community college presidents who are set apart from peers by exhibiting at least four of the following characteristics: (a) evidence of successful relationships with followers (i.e., faculty, classified staff, community partners, and students); (b) evidence of leading the campus successfully; (c) a minimum of 5 years of experience in the profession; (d) articles, papers, or materials written, published, or presented at conferences or association meetings; (e) recognized by their peers; or (f) membership in professional associations within their field.

After applying these parameters using nonprobability, purposeful, and convenience sampling, the sample population for this study consisted of 10 exemplary community college presidents located in California, which allowed for generalization back to the larger population. In addition, each of the 11 other researchers of the thematic team used 10 study participants for his or her sample, which exponentially increased the generalizability back to exemplary leaders.

Identifying Participants

The study was delimited to the 114 California community college presidents who met four of the six criteria for exemplary and would be invited to participate in this study.

While gathering this information, it became clear that there were many more potential participants who met the criteria than were feasible for a phenomenological study. As a result, with assistance from a committee member and former California community college president and vice chancellor for California Community Colleges Chancellor's Office (CCCCO), another determining factor was implemented. Once exemplary was established and a list was generated of potential participants, the list was narrowed by adding the criterion of being the president of a single-college district. Single-college districts are different than multicollege districts as the president of a single-college district is CEO or superintendent for the entire district, whereas multicollege districts have separate presidents who supervise each individual college, and have a chancellor who oversees the district. This was done to ensure more commonalities among procedures, structure, and responsibilities of the community college president. Table 1 demonstrates how the participants for this study met the exemplary criteria and the criterion of being the CEO of a single-college district. Table 2 provides demographic data on each participant. All participant identity was protected by a guarantee of confidentiality. The researcher assigned a specific code to protect each participant's identity. For example, PA correlates to Participant A.

Research Methods and Data Collection Procedures

This qualitative, phenomenological research study used in-depth, semistructured interviews with 10 exemplary community college presidents to gain insight into their lived experiences relating to their use of conversational leadership and its four elements: intimacy, interactivity, inclusion, and intentionality. In order to increase reliability within the study, additional research methods were used, such as the observations of selected

participants and the gathering of organizational artifacts to triangulate the data gathered

from the interviews.

Table 1. *Criteria for Identifying Participants*

Participant ID	Successful relationships with followers	Evidence of leading campus successfully	Minimum of 5 years in the profession	Evidence of publications or presentations	Recognition by peers	Memberships in professional associations	CEO of single-college district
PA	√	√	√	√	√	√	√
PB	√	√	√	√	√	√	√
PC	√	√	√	√	√	√	√
PD	√	√	√	√	√	√	√
PE	√	√	√	√	√	√	√
PF	√	√	√	√	√	√	√
PG	√	√	√	√	√	√	√
PH	√	√	√	√	√	√	√
PI	√	√	√	√	√	√	√
PJ	√	√	√	√	√	√	√

Table 2. *Demographic Data on Participants*

Participant ID	Gender	Years in higher education	Age	Total years as a college president
PA	Male	32	71	13
PB	Male	40	65	8
PC	Male	25	56	11
PD	Female	30	61	6
PE	Male	40	70	12
PF	Male	30	61	10
PG	Male	25	51	7
PH	Male	40	71	21
PI	Female	35	60	5
PJ	Female	40	64	12

Note. Averages are as follow: years in higher education, 34; age, 63; total years as a college president, 10.5.

Interviews

Twelve interview questions were designed collaboratively with a thematic research team of 12 peers and four faculty experts. Three open-ended questions were created for each element (Appendix A) of conversational leadership along with supplementary probing questions (Appendix B) that could be used if additional information was needed to gain a more thorough understanding of the lived experience. Prior to the interview, the researcher sent an invitation to participate and a description of the study to each potential participant. Once the invitation was accepted, the researcher sent an e-mail to each participant confirming the agreed upon interview date and time and attached the informed consent form (Appendix C), the Brandman Bill of Rights (Appendix D), and the interview questions without the additional probes (Appendix A). Six of the interviews were conducted face-to-face with the participant and four interviews were conducted over the phone. All face-to-face interviews were completed in the office of the participant, while phone interviews were conducted in the researcher's office behind a closed door and using professional audio equipment. The interviews varied in length ranging from 29 minutes to 71 minutes, with an average length of 52 minutes. All data from the interviews were collected using a handheld digital recorder and were transcribed soon after the interview was completed. Furthermore, the transcriptions of the interviews were then e-mailed to the participants to ensure accuracy of the thoughts and ideas captured during the interview. Finally, each interview was read through several times with careful examination from the researcher in search of recurring themes related to the elements of conversational leadership.

Observations

        Observations were conducted on three of the 10 participants as a method for the researcher to triangulate the data by witnessing and notating the conversational behaviors of exemplary leaders in their normal work setting. An observation template (Appendix F) that was created in collaboration with peer researchers was used to record the observations. The three observations occurred at the college campus of each participant. One observation included a campus tour and subsequent interactions between the participant and colleagues across campus. The other two observations occurred at the conclusion of the interview and were between participants and their colleagues in meetings and other interactions. In addition, further discussions after the conclusion of the interview that occurred between the participant and the researcher were also recorded on the observation template. There was a total observation time of 4.5 hours combined over all three observations.

Artifacts

        The researcher collected a total of 52 artifacts that aligned with exemplary community college presidents' use of the four elements of Groysberg and Slind's (2012) conversational leadership. These artifacts were collected through various means. For example, some artifacts were requested by the researcher and sent via e-mail either directly from the participant or from the participant's administrative assistant. Some artifacts were collected during the face-to-face interviews and were in the form of publications, newsletters, or communication documents between the participant and constituents. Other artifacts were collected through campus websites and were related to shared governance documents, mission, vision, and goal statements, or other types of

campus communications. Of the 52 artifacts collected, 31 artifacts were utilized in

support of the data collected through interview and observation. Twelve of the artifacts

were not used as they did not directly support the data gathered through interview or

observation.

<h2 align="center">Presentation and Analysis of Data</h2>

The findings that are presented in Chapter IV were resultant from the in-depth

interviews, observations, and artifacts delineating the lived experiences of exemplary

community college presidents as related to the four elements of conversational leadership

depicted by Groysberg and Slind (2012).

Data Analysis

Merriam and Tisdell (2016) described data analysis as "the process of making

sense out of the data" (p. 202). As a result, it is imperative to make sense of the data

collected in this research study by analyzing the content of the interviews, observations,

and artifacts and determining categories that are similar or having internal homogeneity

and dissimilar or having external heterogeneity (Patton, 2015). Merriam and Tisdell

(2016) reported that qualitative data analysis is about identifying these themes,

categories, or patterns that answer the research questions within the study. As a result,

the researcher explored the data looking for consistent themes or nodes and then all 10 of

the transcribed interviews were uploaded into NVivo, a software program that assists in

the coding and analysis of qualitative data. In addition, once coding of the interviews

was completed using NVivo, the frequencies of each node determined the strength of the

theme. Thirty themes among the four elements of conversational leadership emerged

from the data. For instance, Figure 1 demonstrates that seven themes emerged for

intimacy, eight themes emerged for interactivity, nine themes for inclusion, and six themes for intentionality.
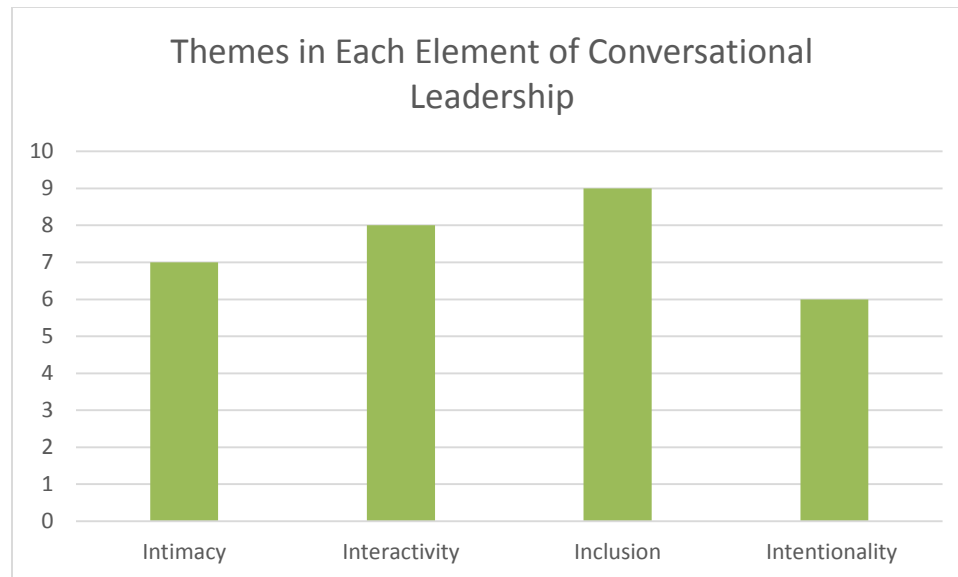
Figure 1. Number of themes in each element.

Although the interviews were the primary source of the data, the field notes from the observations and the artifacts were also uploaded into NVivo and coded, furthering the strength of the themes. Therefore, once internal homogeneity was present, the researcher began to have a greater understanding of the behaviors that exemplary community college presidents practice to lead their organizations through the use of conversation.

Reliability

Triangulation increases the creditability and quality of research by countering a study's concern that findings are simply based on a single method, a single source, or a single researcher's blinders (Merriam & Tisdell, 2016). Therefore, in this research study, triangulation occurred in a variety of ways. For example, by using multiple methods of

data collection through interviews, observations, and artifacts, the researcher triangulated the data, making each method more reliable by having other methods to support the findings. Furthermore, by using peer review to triangulate the data, the reliability of the research study is increased (Merriam & Tisdell, 2016; Patton, 2015). This increased reliability is due to intercoder reliability. Patton (2015) described intercoder reliability as the process by which a peer reviewer independently codes the research data and derives very similar conclusions to the researcher. As a result, a peer researcher analyzed 10% of the data by independently coding one of the 10 interviews that had also been coded by the researcher. The minimum standard was 70% agreement. This resulted in an 86.6% agreement between the researcher and the peer reviewer, resulting from 39 of the 45 frequencies being coded consistently between peer reviewer and researcher. This, therefore, established the reliability of the data analysis.

Research Question and Subquestion Results

The thematic team of 12 peer researchers and four faculty experts worked together to create a central question and four subquestions relating to the topic of conversational leadership. Though each of the 12 researchers studied a different population of exemplary leaders, the research questions, the interview instrument, and the interview protocol were consistent across studies. As a result, the central research question for this study was, "What are the behaviors that exemplary community college presidents practice to lead their organization through conversation using Groysberg and Slind's (2012) four elements of conversational leadership: intimacy, interactivity, inclusion, and intentionality?"

In order to answer the central research question, four subquestions were developed and subsequently data were analyzed in response to the subquestions. The subquestions were created to delineate and examine each element of conversational leadership as demonstrated by the following:

1. How do exemplary community college presidents lead their organizations through the conversation element of intimacy?

2. How do exemplary community college presidents lead their organizations through the conversation element of interactivity?

3. How do exemplary community college presidents lead their organizations through the conversation element of inclusion?

4. How do exemplary community college presidents lead their organizations through the conversation element of intentionality?

Furthermore, an in-depth, semistructured interview (Appendix A) was collaboratively created among the thematic team in order to gather data relating to the subquestions.

Thirty themes emerged from the data collected during the interviews, and 549 frequencies of those themes were coded from analysis of the 10 interviews, three observations, and 31 artifacts. As stated previously and evidenced in Figure 1, there were seven themes for intimacy, eight themes for interactivity, nine themes for inclusion, and six themes for intentionality. Once the themes were established and coded in NVivo, the frequency rate was configured. The frequency rate as demonstrated in Figure 2 determined the strength of the theme by the number of times each theme was referenced in an interview, appeared in an artifact, or notated through observation. As a result,

frequency was calculated in each theme related to the four elements of conversation
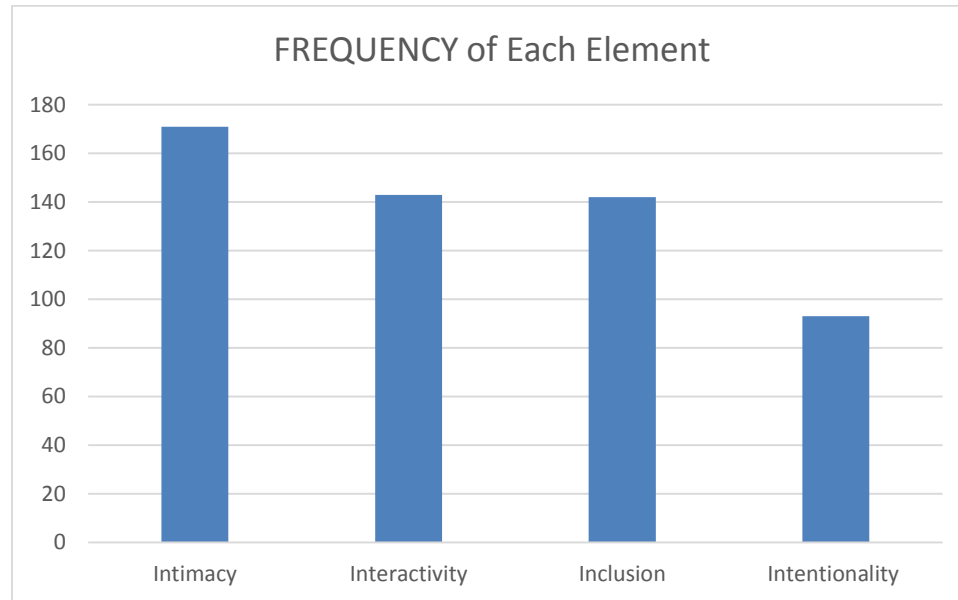
leadership.

Figure 2. Frequency of themes within each element of conversational leadership.

Intimacy had seven themes and the highest frequency rates within themes. It was

referenced 171 times, accounting for 31% of the data. Interactivity had eight themes and

a frequency rate of 143, resulting in 26% of the data, which was similar to inclusion with

nine themes and a frequency rate of 142, also resulting in 26% of the data. Interactivity

had the lowest number of themes (six) and a frequency rate of 93, resulting in 17% of the

data collected. Figure 3 demonstrates the percentage of the data collected pertaining to

each element of conversational leadership.
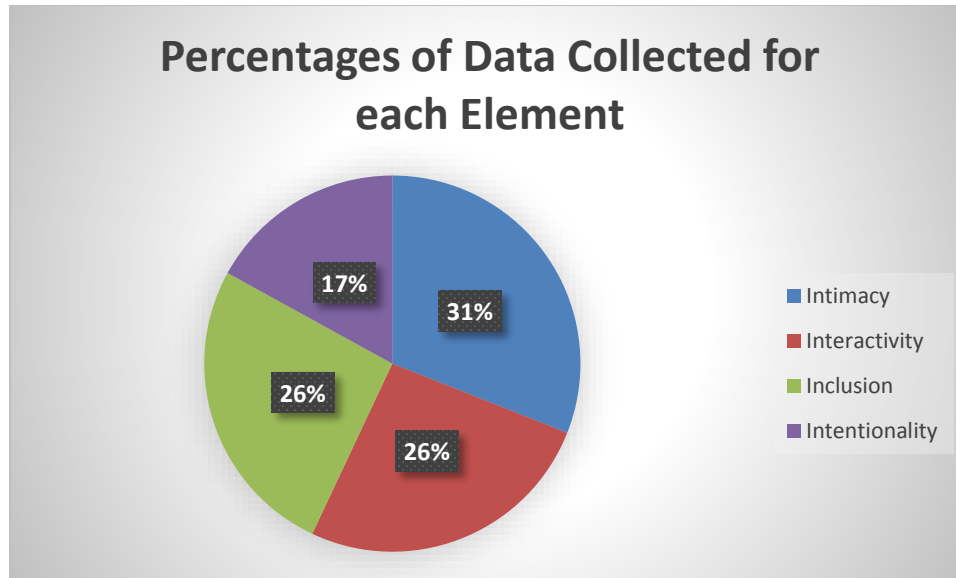
Figure 3. Percentages of the total data collected in relation to each element.

Intimacy

Intimacy, for the purpose of this study, has been defined with collaboration of the thematic research team as the closeness, trust, and familiarity created between people through shared experiences, meaningful exchanges, and shared knowledge (Glaser, 2014; Groysberg & Slind, 2012b; Schwarz, 2011). During the coding process, seven themes emerged in relation to intimacy. These seven themes were referenced 171 times through interview, observations, and artifacts, accounting for 31% of all references. Each theme under the conversational element of intimacy is identified in Table 3 along with its correlating number of frequencies per source.

Table 3. *Intimacy Themes*

Intimacy themes	Interview sources	Observation sources	Artifact sources	Total sources	Frequency	% of data within element	% of total data
Sharing stories as a way to bond with others	9	2	7	18	45	26%	8%
Being genuine, authentic, and transparent	9	1	3	13	37	22%	7%
Actively listening to members of the organization	9	1	1	11	26	15%	5%
Celebrating or acknowledging others' contributions	7	1	9	17	22	13%	4%
Being accessible and approachable to members of the organization	7	2	1	10	17	10%	3%
Acting upon messages received to build trust	8	1	0	9	15	9%	3%
Using humor to build relationships	4	1	0	5	9	5%	2%

Sharing stories as a way to bond with others. Nine out of the 10 presidents who participated in this study indicated through interview that sharing stories was a way to bond with others in the organization. This theme was referenced 45 times in 18 sources and accounted for 26% of the coded data for the element of intimacy. In fact, this theme was referenced more times than any other individual theme across the four elements. This theme also corresponds to the evidence found in the literature, which indicates the importance of using intimate conversation, such that occurs in storytelling, to build relationships by gaining trust and familiarity with others (Berson & Stieglitz, 2013;

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Groysberg & Slind, 2012; Mayfield & Mayfield, 2002; Mazutis & Slawinski, 2007).

Groysberg and Slind (2012) furthered this notion by stating that leaders who practice conversational intimacy "are at ease in revealing to employees not only their thoughts about strategy and operations, but also by providing a glimpse of themselves" (p. 16).

Glaser (2014) also mirrored this sentiment by explaining that sharing stories and getting to know employees on a personal level are significant ways to build trust and bond with others in the organization.

Since community college presidents are leaders of numerous constituents, including students, faculty, classified staff, administrators, and community members, bonding and building trust with constituents is seen by experts as an imperative strategy in effectively leading the organization. In fact, Groysberg and Slind (2012) stated, "Where there is no trust, there is no intimacy" (p. 18). As a result, having nine out of 10 presidents mention storytelling as a strategy to bond with others is a significant finding. One president explained the value of storytelling as follows:

> But, I guess it is about sharing the value of education and I bring a lot of personal anecdotes. In the end, it's about being human and sharing what I do. Because . . . any time you want to promote trust between you and the members of your organization, they will need to see you as a human being who has compassion and emotions as any human being does. They need to know that he is like me and that he goes through life and has problems to deal with. So I start all my meetings with my executive team by telling them what I did over the weekend, things that happened, and how I deal with them.

Telling stories as a way to bond and build intimacy was also explained by various presidents as a way to be relatable to others. One president gave the example of how others see him as the "role" of president and not sharing the same experiences: "They think you just grow up and are 'poof' a president or administrator." He explained the necessity of telling his constituents stories of his time as a classified member or faculty member of the organization to instill a sense of shared and relatable experiences. Another president who also felt that employees need to relate to him as a human being shared, "We take from one another and learn and we share and we have this new shared knowledge . . . so, you have to build trust because the people who are working with you need to see the human side."

Moreover, some presidents relayed that the human side is more vulnerable and it is important to show that vulnerability to constituents so they can relate. Groysberg and Slind (2012) explained that leaders should get personal in their interactions with employees, and reveal themselves, even if that means revealing a vulnerable side, because they are more connected and trusted by those they lead. This reflects the sentiment that one participant revealed in an interview, "I think if you can show that you are vulnerable by a story, it can demonstrate that you are trustworthy." This idea of sharing stories as a way to trust and be trusted was replicated consistently through the interviews with exemplary community college presidents.

In addition to the numerous references made in interviews regarding the benefits of sharing stories with others, seven of the artifacts contained information pertaining to the sharing of stories. Evidence of these shared stories was obtainable through newsletters and communication documents sent through the president's office. All seven

artifacts relating to storytelling were coded under this theme, adding to the overall number of frequencies.

Finally, during two of the three observations, the researcher was witness to the participants' behaviors in storytelling. For example, when the researcher took a campus tour with one of the presidents who participated in this study, it was noted how often the president addressed constituents by name and then added a comment or question pertaining to a situation or event that the constituent was experiencing. It appeared there was already knowledge of these personal experiences. In fact, an employee of the college was walking by and the president politely excused himself from the conversation with the researcher and went up to this employee, calling him by his first name, touching his shoulder, and asking if everything was ok. The president explained to the researcher upon his return that this employee was going through a difficult time and he just wanted to take a second to ask him how he was doing. As a result, this observation was coded and became an additional frequency for this theme.

Actively listening to members of the organization. This theme was referenced a total of 26 times over 11 sources and represented 15% of the coded data for the conversational element of intimacy. Ninety percent of the participants in this study demonstrated that *actively listening to members of the organization* was an effective strategy in promoting intimacy. A few of the presidents indicated how active listening was achieved and one stated,

> I am conditioned and trained to listen, not to just hear with my ears, but to take in visual cues and read my surroundings. So . . . that I am receiving all of the ways in which people are sending me information.

Ruben and Gigliotti (2016) concur by acknowledging that leaders need to demonstrate their attentiveness by nodding, paying attention, and having appropriate responses during a conversation, to demonstrate their investment in the employee.

Berson and Stieglitz (2013) contended that listening is a primary construct of an effective conversation. They added that it is just as important to hear what an individual is *not* saying as it is to hear what they are saying. The data collected support the following explanation of active listening when a participant stated through interview,

> Many times when you are listening, you also have your own opinions about things. So, I try to listen with what I call the inner ear. I guess one could say that you put down your own defenses and you try to hear what the person is really saying and what they're really 'not' saying.

Zimmerman (1991) asserted that conscious, well-developed conversations can only occur if each person is contributing to the conversation and has mastered the art of listening. Active listening results in a mutual trust between those involved in the conversation. Zimmerman went on to explain that the art of listening is a selfless act directed by the conscious will to devote oneself entirely to what is heard. The author insisted, "The way we listen enables others to speak and provides the possibility of things being said that may not have been said otherwise" (p. 43).

In one of the interviews coded for this theme, a president explained that there was a contentious discussion among some organizational members and he knew that the only way to deescalate the situation and to gain their trust was to actively listen to what was being said and be attentive to the person saying it. He gave an example pertinent to one of the very discontented members involved in this discussion, "After hearing all of his

venting, he rocked forward in his chair and he goes, I have faith because of you . . . and you sitting down and listening and talking to me." This president felt this example exemplifies the president's role in listening and developing trust and a mutual respect with constituents. Groysberg and Slind (2012) stated that there are few behaviors that enhance conversational intimacy as robustly as the practice of attending to what other people say.

There was one artifact and one observation that were coded to add to the frequency of this theme. In fact, it was during an observation when the president showed her prized possession of a framed word cloud that identified her as a really good listener given to her by a constituent group at the college. She went on to explain that she always has a tablet and pen at her side so she can take notes when she is listening to an employee speak. She expressed that this strategy helps her really focus on what is being said so she can fully understand the message being conveyed to her. A copy of this framed picture was also coded as an artifact.

Being accessible and approachable to members of the organization. This theme was referenced 17 times over 10 sources and accounts for 10% of the coded data related to the element of intimacy. Seven of the 10 participants reported through interviews that being accessible and approachable to the members of their organization was a needed behavior in developing relationships. One president stated, "One of the things that I use to communicate to people is that they have access to me," while another president relayed, "And, I don't just meet with the quote, leaders of the organization. Anybody has access to me; almost to a fault."

The literature also supports the importance of accessibility as a key component in developing intimacy. Groysberg and Slind (2012) explained that a distance is created between leaders and employees in organizations where there is a sharply delineated hierarchy. As a result, there are inherent institutional and psychological gaps between leaders and employees in higher education organizations created merely by position and role alone. Therefore, reducing that gap by being accessible and approachable becomes a prominent strategy to build camaraderie and intimacy within the organization. One president indicated that he purposefully behaves in a way to make constituents more comfortable when he explained a recent situation,

> I just had two students come in here to try and say thank you and to get on our board agenda. [laughing] I swear they were trembling, because there was nobody in the lobby to greet them, so I greeted them and my assistant came in and she even validated their feelings and said, "It's like so scary to be meeting with the president." It's like, I really go out of my way to tone it down because I want my students, I want my staff, I want my faculty, to really feel comfortable and to make sure I'm approachable.

Being accessible and available was also coded and added to the frequencies of this theme in one artifact and two observations. The artifact was obtained from a college webpage in which the president provides hours of availability through "chats with the president" and an open-door policy. Furthermore, in one of the observations, the president showed the researcher numerous pictures on the walls of his office where he and his constituents were at campus events and activities. He then stated how important

it is for him to be visible at these events and accessible to students, classified staff, and faculty.

Being genuine, authentic, and transparent. This theme was referenced by nine of the 10 presidents through interview. In addition, it was referenced through 13 sources, with a frequency rate of 37 times, representing 22% of the data coded for the element of intimacy. One president stated,

> I would say, generally speaking, I approach people from a standpoint of trying to be as genuine as possible in my encounters with them, so that they know that when I'm giving them information that I'm giving all of the information that I can give them . . . but they also know that I'm not going to give them information that is based on trying to manipulate or control the situation.

Another president indicated the way in which he builds trust in the organization when he stated, "So I think there's several elements to trust. One is that I'm transparent, so that I don't have some things that are kept from public knowledge. I try to be as open as possible to distributing information honestly."

Being authentic was often associated with being genuine, honest, or transparent in conversations and was deemed an important facet in building trust. Groysberg and Slind (2012) revealed that authentic leadership and authentic conversations are needed to build intimacy and encourage leaders to let down their guard, set aside their roles, and talk straight with employees. This sentiment was evident when one president stated, "I think by typically just being genuine, by being a person, and . . . by letting them see me when I'm strong and letting them see me, you know, when I'm vulnerable. By keeping it real."

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The literature proposes that if conversational intimacy is achieved, difficult conversations, complaints, and organizational problems are more easily diffused through an honest and transparent conversation between members who feel close to one another (Berson & Stieglitz, 2013; Ford & Ford, 1985; Kegan & Lahey, 2001). One president concluded that one gets close to members of the organization and becomes more efficient in decision making "when you see the genuine authentic person at their core, you get to see the legitimate answers, and not the scripted ones."

Being genuine, authentic, and transparent was also coded in three artifacts and one observation, adding to the frequencies found within this theme. One of the artifacts was a speech given by a president at the campus convocation, in which he said, "Moving forward, our planning team will also work with the shared governance committees to ensure ongoing transparency and regular feedback from the faculty, staff, and school community," indicating the importance of building rapport with transparent communication practices. During an observation, the researcher noted the genuine and honest responses and behaviors of the participant in his interaction with other constituents and with the researcher.

Acting upon messages received to build trust. Eight of the 10 participants discussed the importance of acting upon messages received even if the action is not the desirable outcome of the messenger. Acting upon messages demonstrates that the leader was attending to the message and builds a sense of trust with members of the organization. This theme was referenced 15 times across nine sources and accounts for 9% of the coded content for this theme. For example, one president explained,

One of the other things that I have is done, is you know when people are involved and when I ask for their feedback and their suggestions about things, they know that information is going to be taken under advisement. It's not just a placeholder, it's not just something that I'm doing to make them feel good about being part of the process. I really need their input and as someone who is new to the organization, then it makes sense to get feedback from people who have been here for a long time and know the history of the place and they know why we're doing certain things the way that we do.

Another president explained that people can only trust the decision-making process in the organization by ensuring, "visibility to the fact that the final decisions made are not what originally was proposed." He suggested doing this allows people to see that the input and messages received were used as a factor in making decisions. Furthermore, it also creates an intimate relationship with people in the organization when they feel their suggestions are acted upon.

Though "acting upon messages received" has aspects of interactivity and inclusion, it was placed in the theme of intimacy because when presidents were being interviewed, they often drew parallels between acting on messages and building trusting relationships with constituents. Much of the literature is in agreement that intimacy in relationship building cannot occur without trust (Groysberg & Slind, 2012; Mayfield & Mayfield, 2002; Mazutis & Slawinski, 2007). Therefore, when presidents follow through and take action in regard to messages received by their constituents, employees begin to trust that the president values their input and a more intimate relationship develops.

One observation was coded using this theme and added to its overall frequency. For example, during a campus tour with the president, the researcher noted when the president was displaying a new building, he explained that some controversy arose as to who (which departments and staff) would occupy the premises. The president explained that group discussions ensued across constituent groups, and now some of the staff and departments who are occupying the space were not originally intended to do so. He stated that decisions and plans need to evolve and change depending on the collaborative discussions of campus colleagues.

Celebrating or acknowledging others' contributions. This theme was referenced 22 times across 17 sources, representing 13% of the coded content for this theme. In addition, seven of the 10 presidents discussed the importance of acknowledging and celebrating the contributions of others in the organization to increase engagement and feelings of connection to the organization. Furthermore, when the president of the campus does the acknowledging of employee contributions, a more intimate and trusting relationship develops between them. An acknowledged employee feels cared for and valued. Berson and Stieglitz (2013) expressed the importance of celebrating and recognizing others' contributions to build an engaged and committed workforce. They stated that when a leader values the contributions of employees and expresses that, especially in the presence of others, the leader is demonstrating how much he or she cares about that employee and what they bring to the table. As Berson and Stieglitz concluded, "Recognition is inexpensive, but a lack of recognition can be costly" (p. 141), especially when talented people leave an organization because they do not feel invested in or cared for.

During an interview, one president revealed how she felt more connected to her constituents when she honored and acknowledged the great work they were doing. She stated,

And I told them I wanted to make sure that they get the credit for the development and implementation of this initiative. I may have had a vision, but they have made it what it is and they are the experts, not me. And so, they just were overjoyed at the fact that 'she wants us' to get the credit for the work.

She went on to express how they felt valued by the acknowledgment and became more deeply engaged in the project.

Another president also related that celebrating others accomplishments builds relationships and leads to greater engagement from employees. This president shared how he started implementing a campus award each year and how the winners are announced at convocation in front of all their peers. He explained,

Our award is (there is one category for faculty and one for staff), and every year we give an award to the best ideas from a specific category. We give the award along with a monetary award as well. And this is something I've encouraged and it's something that we give each year at the convocation program. People write it up and they compete for it and even those who don't win, have gained something throughout the process. It's a group award or individual award, and it works towards engagement.

This theme was also referenced in one observation and nine artifacts, and the coded content added to the overall frequency. During the observation, the president showed framed pictures on his wall of events or activities with staff and faculty. He

shared stories of their successes and spoke of the importance of publicly acknowledging those successes. Nine artifacts also demonstrated through media, newsletters, and websites how employees' contributions are recognized and celebrated.

Using humor to build relationships. Though this theme was referenced the least number of times with a frequency rate of nine across five sources and only accounted for 5% of the data coded for the element of intimacy, the researcher still felt the theme was significant because of the conviction of four presidents that it was a way to build relationships. In conversational leadership, the element of intimacy is about building relationships and getting to know employees in a more informal and genuine way. Groysberg and Slind (2012) insisted that a capable leader will draw people out of their protective shell by using empathy and a little ingenuity, by being real and letting their constituents see them in a more personable way. Being personable and relating to others can often be achieved through humor. Di Virgilio and Ludema (2009) also emphasized the benefit of humor because it brings feelings of joy and those positive emotions lead to employees who are engaged in and committed to the organization. One president stated,

> But I do still believe that humor and letting people laugh and getting people who just have a good time with each other is very important for our employees and it helps breaking up the seriousness of what we do. So again, I think this is something that can be bonding for all. But there's an intimacy with that, and it is opening yourself up.

Another president discussed the importance of humor in his interview by stating that getting to know people more intimately is not just learning about the pleasant or difficult experiences, but it is also about connecting through humor and laughter. He

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stated, "And I think we have that bond around the table, but it is through shared experiences of laughter."

Though this element was not coded in any artifacts, it was referenced in an observation when the researcher noted that the president laughed frequently with employees, infusing humor as a way to bond with others. When touring the campus, this president often made jokes with employees and they shared in robust and genuine laughter.

Interactivity

Interactivity is the second element of conversational leadership and was defined by the thematic research team as a "bilateral or multilateral exchange of comments and ideas, a back-and-forth process" (Groysberg & Slind, 2012). After the coding process was completed, eight themes emerged related to the element on interactivity. This element was referenced 143 times in this study. Furthermore, interactivity produced 26% of the coded content for this research study and had a frequency rate second to intimacy. Table 4 identifies the eight themes of interactivity and the origin of sources and frequency of the coded references.

Encouraging open dialogue. The theme *encouraging open dialogue* was referenced 35 times across 16 sources and accounted for 24% of the coded data related to the conversational element of interactivity. Groysberg and Slind (2012) referred to interactivity as having an open dialogue that is fluid rather than closed and directive, such as occurs in a monologue. Furthermore, other experts also express the importance of an interactive exchange in dialogue between members of the organization by positing that leaders must create a culture of interactivity and invite each person to participate,

especially those who may be less inclined to do so (Berson & Stieglitz, 2013; Groysberg & Slind, 2012; Weber, 2013).

Table 4. *Interactivity Themes*

Interactivity themes	Interview sources	Observation sources	Artifact sources	Total sources	Frequency	% of data within element	% of total data
Encouraging open dialogue	10	1	5	16	35	24%	6%
Providing multiple modes of communication	6	0	18	24	27	19%	5%
Using institutional processes to encourage collaboration	7	0	1	8	15	10%	3%
Having one-on-one meetings or open office hours	8	0	0	8	15	10%	3%
Asking thoughtful questions as a means to engage others	7	3	1	11	15	10%	2%
Holding open forums or town halls	6	0	0	6	13	9%	2%
Ensuring broad representation in committee groups and meetings	7	1	2	10	12	8%	2%
Explaining motive (why) as a way to increase engagement	4	0	0	4	11	8%	2%

Ten of the 10 presidents (100%) who participated in this study identified *encouraging open dialogue* as instrumental in the role of the community college

president. For example, one president summed up his thoughts on an interactive and open dialogue, by stating,

> The word converse is Latin and the first part "con," translates to together and the second part, "verse" means to turn . . . so a conversation is "to turn together." So, that's what we should be dedicated to. It's not "I verse" it's not "my turning the group," it's "us turning together."

Another president stated he had a strategy that he uses to foster a culture of open dialogue when there are difficult or contentious issues by saying to others in the organization, "Help me to understand . . . because we have made it a really big point to stop asking things, like you know, What the hell are you thinking? That kind of thing does not promote open dialogue." He reiterated that his role is to encourage and model open dialogue across campus, in meetings, on committees, and anywhere else that conversations take place.

During the interview, one of the presidents shared how imperative it is in academia to have ideas that vary from one another so a back-and-forth dialogue occurs. He discussed a recent situation where a speaker was invited to the campus to speak about a topic that had some controversy surrounding it as many people were polarized on the issue. As a result, another speaker was invited to give an alternative viewpoint, but the invitation was rescinded by members of the campus faculty and staff who did not want this person to speak on campus because his ideology varied greatly from theirs. As a result, the president felt the need to step in and encourage the invitation to promote open dialogue across campus.

And I go . . . well, we have to have a balance of free speech. And it was one

faculty member against another one. And to be honest, I didn't agree with the

speaker that they wanted to bring on but out of fairness and free speech and

having a robust open debate on a topic, you have to provide both sides.

Another president explained that committees allow for open dialogue and he

reinforces that process. He explained,

There are other times, where on the agenda in those meetings, it's much more

about being presented with something and the opportunity for the group to, from

their perspective of where they sit, to consult collegially, and that has to include

open dialogue as well.

This theme was also referenced in five artifacts and one observation. One of the

artifacts that was coded for this theme came from a district website, where the mission,

values, and goals of the college were stated. However, the following message was also

on that same page and encouraged open dialogue among constituents:

We operate in a culture of mutual respect and lifelong learning, developing

relationships among students and employees to enrich our collective appreciation

for diverse ideas, thoughts, and experiences. Our culture is supported by a

philosophy that shared governance and academic freedom are primary vehicles in

promoting excellence in all teaching, learning, and services through open and

honest communication.

During an observation of a campus tour with a president, the president showed the

researcher the campus' recent addition of art work, murals, and other elements related to

cultural diversity. He explained that these things resulted from a conversation with

student leaders and campus employees about wanting to have visual representations of diversity. He further shared that this became a multilateral conversation that included many groups across campus. Open discussions ensued about types of images, where the art/images would come from, possible funding, where the art/images would be placed, what specific cultures would be represented. He said that this rich conversation led to these beautiful artistic representations across campus. The researcher coded this observation under the theme of encouraging an open dialogue, which increased its frequency.

Providing multiple modes of communication. This theme was identified by six of the 10 presidents as being a critical component of the element of interactivity. It was referenced 27 times across 24 sources and made up 19% of the coded content for interactivity. Groysberg and Slind (2012) also stated the importance of multiple delivery sources of information, especially in the digital age. One president explained that all communication has to be consumable by the recipients based on people's learning styles and access to technology. He stated, "So . . . I think it can't just be one medium [communicating], when you have important information, whether it's large scale or institutional, strategic plans, departmental operational initiatives, you have to ask, Are you delivering it in multiple mediums?"

Six of the presidents stated that multiple modes of communication enhance accessibility to the information that is out there and the increased likelihood of receiving feedback from constituents. Three of the presidents identified video chats as a way to be interactive with constituents in a multilateral way. Experts in the literature also agree that technology can allow for a bilateral or multilateral conversation through web-enabled

video chat services (Groysberg & Slind, 2012; Koo et al., 2011). Furthermore, two of the 18 artifacts coded for this theme were video chats on specific topics led by community college presidents who participated in this study. Therefore, *providing multiple modes of communication* allows more people access to the dialogue and it promotes an interactive process.

Using institutional processes to encourage collaboration. Seven of the 10 presidents who participated in this study identified institutional processes in higher education as an avenue to encourage an interactive exchange of ideas and collegial collaboration. This theme was referenced 15 times in eight sources and accounted for 10% of the coded content for the conversational element of interactivity. Groysberg and Slind (2012) discussed the importance of organizations having institutional practices that foster an interactive dialogue between members of the organization. Seventy percent of the participants in this study agreed that community colleges have some institutional practices that do foster this interactive dialogue, such as the shared governance committee structures that are in place. These committees are an avenue for multiple constituent groups to have dialogue with one another regarding the issues and policies that affect the organization. These committees are also the place where campus wide planning and decisions are made. One president stated, "We have some committees that we have formed here at the college and which allow us to talk about critical issues and ensure that a variety of constituents are involved in those talks," while another president stated, "So these committees allow an open process that respects the rules of each of the groups on campus, but still allows us to make an intelligent decision."

The literature reveals that the most important part of an interactive conversation is that both parties feel comfortable and safe to contribute to the contents of the conversation. (Groysberg & Slind 2012; Law, 2009; Patterson et.al, 2012). As a result, institutional processes and the guiding philosophy of shared governance committees lends to employees from multiple groups and varying perspectives to participate in multilateral conversations in an environment where these contributions are not only protected but expected.

One president revealed that some decisions will not be favored by all even if multiple perspectives are part of the dialogue preceding the decision. However, she expressed that the shared governance committee process ensures that these multiple perspectives are heard and employees want and need to be heard more than having all decisions being made in their favor. One artifact was coded for this theme as it demonstrated the governance structure of the organization, committee purviews, and committee constituent composition, ensuring a multilateral dialogue.

Having one-on-one meetings and open office hours. This theme was referenced 15 times over eight sources and made up 10% of the coded data for the element of interactivity. Eight of the 10 presidents who participated in this research study stated that they offered employees one-on-one meeting availability or having open office hours. One president discussed how he meets with middle managers at the end of every year. He sets up an appointment with them ahead of time and then meets with them in their office. The president says that going to the employees' office makes for a more interactive dialogue because he has shifted the balance of power away from the "President's Office."

Another president explained the value of one-on-one meetings, when she stated,

What I want to hear is what they have to say. One of the problems in a complex

organization is that the information that comes to me is filtered. So, these middle

managers communicate to me through the organizational structure, which means

the vice presidents. The vice presidents do a good job, but it's more useful for me

to hear from them directly. This way we can have an interactive dialogue that is

unfiltered.

Groysberg and Slind (2012) believed there is no replacement for an in-person, one-on-

one conversation for similar reasons as this president shared. In fact, the authors propose

that conversation thrives when participants are able to be present with one another, both

in mind and in body. They explained that in this two-way exchange, people are often

forced to show their true, unadorned face, because interactivity calls for both intimacy

and authenticity. As a result, one-on-one meetings between the president and

constituents are a way to have this authentic interactive dialogue. One president relayed

that in addition to hosting one-on-one meetings, she holds open office hours that are

announced to staff ahead of time. She even hosts some hours in the evening time so

employees who work later shifts can share an interactive dialogue with her in this setting.

Asking thoughtful questions as a means to engage others. This theme was

referenced by seven of the 10 presidents who participated in this study. In addition, the

theme was referenced 15 times over 11 sources and accounts for 10% of the content

coded for the element of interactivity. Seventy percent of the participants expressed that

asking thoughtful questions to constituents can assist in an interactive dialogue. One

president shared that there are times when a situation has occurred and a member of the

organization is affected by this situation and has some trouble starting the conversation, and this is when these thoughtful questions can be an asset to open communication. For example, this same president said,

> He needed support and attention . . . But still, it was the meeting with him, and several others, as we talked through it all, and asking, What was your experience? How do you feel? What does this mean? What could we as a college do?

Zimmerman (1991) explained that conversations are not merely for sharing, but also for seeking a greater understanding and insight from the conversation. Asking questions can help guide the discussion so a mutual understanding is achieved.

For instance, one president intimated that questions help facilitate a bilateral or multilateral discussion. This president gave a personal account of when it was difficult to ascertain what exactly a particular constituency group's goal was for the outcome of a situation. He stated,

> But, I sat down with this person and the president of the student government and again, engaged in a discussion by asking him, What are you trying to accomplish? What is this about? Are there other ways you could be doing this? . . . And so, it was talking to the different sides, and learning the different views on it, and trying to be a facilitator of discussion.

Groysberg and Slind (2012) also recognized that leaders should develop strategies to encourage a bilateral or multilateral discussion. Seven participants shared that asking thoughtful questions is such a strategy.

The researcher also coded one artifact and three observations to this theme, adding to the overall frequency. The artifact referenced was from a newsletter from the

president in which topics were introduced and a section of it was titled, "Questions to Guide Discussion," where a list of questions followed to assist in further campus discussions regarding these topics. In addition, during all three observations, the researcher noted the president directing thoughtful questions to others or even at the researcher so the dialogue was bilateral or multilateral.

Holding open forums or town halls. This theme was referenced by six of the 10 participants as being an avenue to facilitate open and interactive discussion. Some presidents stated open forums without topics is a way for people to bring in their various concerns, ideas, or information to a group setting. Other presidents indicated that forums, or town halls, where a topic for discussion is announced ahead of time allows people to research the topic or their interest in it and then come prepared to discuss their viewpoints on the topic. It does not matter whether a topic is announced or left open, all six participants agreed that it is a great way to have an interactive discussion with all constituents across the campus. Groysberg and Slind (2012) stated that leaders need to create channels that the organization utilizes to facilitate discussion and that operate in two directions, both to employees and from employees. The interviews with presidents indicated that the majority of them feel that forums or town halls can be such a channel.

One president who consistently utilizes open forums stated,

Well every month we hold what is called a "forum" that is open to all members of this [organization] to tackle important issues for the students, employees, administrators, and board members. This is where I share information about the college with everybody and openly receive feedback.

Another president who likes to provide the topic ahead of time shared,

So this month, later this month, we'll have a town hall meeting. I've used this

town hall process several times for major issues like this. So it is announced well

in advance. There's a 10:00 a.m. and 3:00 p.m. meeting for the town hall on

Tuesday, later this month. The topic has already been announced.

Both of these statements from interviews with participants are examples of presidents

providing a space for information to go out to constituents and for information to come in

from constituents.

One president suggested that town halls can be a great place for a particular group

to share a topic that may have either positive or negative consequences on them. He

shared a story related to a political situation in which the federal government enacted a

policy that would have negative consequences for students:

So that's a really important topic and one that involved many students. So we had

a town hall that was focused around students and let the board hear about the

topic from the student perspective (boards of trustees tend to be more

conservative than the communities they serve).

He went on to say that using this method was a great way to get a conversation going on

an important topic.

Ensuring broad representation in committee groups and meetings. Seven of

the 10 participants suggested that the president plays a role in ensuring that those with a

vested interest in the discussion should be at the table when these discussions occur.

Sometimes, the topics for discussion affect all constituents, and the president should

make certain that voices from all constituent groups are present. For example, one

president explained, "It has to be broad based and not just five or six people from

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leadership who are sitting there putting the strategic plan together and developing the

program learning outcomes on their own and all those things." He made a point of

relaying that the strategic plan affected everyone in the organization, so it was imperative

to have a multilateral exchange of thoughts and ideas from various representatives.

This theme was referenced 12 times across 10 sources and represented 8% of the

total content coded for the conversational element of interactivity. This theme is

consistent with the literature, which indicates that leaders must create a culture of

interactivity and invite each person to participate in organizational decisions (Berson &

Stieglitz, 2013; Groysberg & Slind, 2012; Weber, 2013). One of the study participants

suggested,

> [It is the president's responsibility to] make sure that we have college wide
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> committees that include members from all those various groups and that they
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> participate in the creation of the agenda and that they participate in the running of
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> the meeting and that their voice is heard.

This theme was also coded in one interview and two artifacts, adding to the

overall frequency of the theme. In one of the artifacts collected on the president's page

of the college website gave an overview of the college governing process and had a

statement that read, "College's governance structure involves faculty, staff,

administration, students, and the community in the planning and operation of the

college." It went on to detail that it is a collaborative process that promotes diverging

views and is inclusive in its membership, which serves to demonstrate the importance of

encouraging broad representation on committees. Though this president's quote has

elements of both interactivity and inclusion, it is still demonstrative of needing a wide

range of people to have a multilateral, interactive conversation.

Furthermore, in one observation when the president and the researcher were

discussing a group picture on the office wall (the picture was of a campus committee at a

campus-wide event), he stated,

> It is so important to have broad representation on committees and in campus
>
> dialogue and not to have the same five to 10 leaders across campus . . . so, it is my
>
> job to encourage employee participation and to ensure campus administrators and
>
> management honor that.

All of the data collected in this theme indicate that 70% of the participants see the

president as having an important role in ensuring that all constituent groups have the

ability to actively participate in the planning and governance of the college through

campus committees and interactive discussions.

Explaining motive (why) as a way to increase engagement. Though this theme

was only referenced by four participants, they referenced it 11 times, which accounted for

8% of the content coded for the element of interactivity. Sinek (2009) contended that

when leaders explain why to their employees, they are ensuring that assumptions are not

being made while bringing clarity to the decision-making process and often providing

others a motivation in achieving organizational goals. The interviews with the

participants indicate that 40% of the study participants concur with Sinek. This was

evident when one president stated, "So I'll start with something that's a very simple idea.

People are motivated about "why" not how. And too many leaders focus on, well here's

how we're going to do this." It is along these same lines of motivation that one president

said, "So it's important, that for the mission of the college to be accomplished, everyone has to know why they're doing the work that they're doing." Furthermore, another president added to this idea by commenting, "In the end, you're more productive in an environment where people know why they're doing what they're doing, so that they give meaningful input." Finally, another president provided an example of explaining her motive for decisions to her constituents, "They start to trust it and I always tell them that you may not agree with me, but I will explain why my decision was made and that may help you understand how I got there." She went on to further assert that people will not speak up or participate in an exchange of ideas if they do not understand the motives behind the topic.

Inclusion

The third element of Groysberg and Slind's (2012) model for conversational leadership is inclusion, which is defined by the thematic research team as a commitment to the process of engaging stakeholders to share ideas and participate in the development of the organization (Groysberg & Slind, 2012; Hurley & Brown, 2009). It was during the coding process that nine themes emerged for the element of inclusion, resulting in 142 references across interviews, observations, and artifacts. Table 5 demonstrates these nine themes along with the number of sources and frequency of references.

Creating a collective identity for the organization. Eight of the 10 presidents interviewed in this study demonstrated that creating a collective identity, as in branding, was an instrumental factor in bringing the campus community together so that everyone felt included and connected. As a result, this theme was referenced 23 times over 11 sources and made up 16% of the coded content for the element of inclusion. In fact, this

theme and the next theme, *promoting feedback*, accounted for the majority of all data

coded for inclusion, with a combined frequency of 32%.

Table 5. *Inclusion Themes*

Inclusion themes	Interview sources	Observation sources	Artifact sources	Total sources	Frequency	% of data within element	% of total data
Creating a collective identity for the organization (branding)	8	1	2	11	23	16%	4%
Promoting feedback	10	0	1	11	23	16%	4%
Allowing members of the organization to create or deliver organizational messages	9	1	2	12	19	13%	3%
Instilling a sense of shared responsibility or ownership	7	0	1	8	19	13%	3%
Hosting campus events that promote social behaviors between constituents	4	1	4	9	15	11%	3%
Providing a risk-free space	6	0	2	8	15	11%	3%
Including key stakeholders in campus conversations	7	0	0	7	11	8%	2%
Sending out consistent and regular communications to all stakeholders	5	0	3	8	10	7%	2%
Providing opportunities for members of the organization to showcase their expertise	5	0	1	6	7	5%	1%

Some presidents expressed that creating a collective identity allows everyone to be connected to one another by the mission, vision, and goals. For example, one president stated, "My role is to have that kind of leadership, where people feel like they're part of something and they're not just showing up for work . . . but, they're actually part of something bigger." She went on to share that it is important to identify what that something bigger is. The participant also shared that there needs to be a collective and inclusive effort by the campus community in identifying or branding what the college is or what it stands for. Another president who thought along the same lines facilitated a campus wide staff development activity as a way to develop a campus theme that could unite the campus constituents. This president stated,

> So . . .You know what we did this year? We came up with a campus theme. And we used Simon Sinek's book, *Together is Better*. And, we built community and we gave everyone the book. And our theme ended up being, "better together." We even had T-shirts made. Everyone wore these shirts . . . so when I speak throughout the year, or when I deliver messages to different groups, I reference that and the campus references it. If we get into a discussion or in a dialogue that starts to go sideways . . . we say, "so how is that better together?" Everybody gets outside of themselves and gets away from "me" and gets back to "we."

The literature also discusses the benefit of creating a collective identity as a way for transformational leaders to forge a bond with a diverse group of followers. In fact, experts state that these leaders should intentionally interact with followers to mobilize their participation in the organization and to encourage a collective identity based on the goals of the organization. Furthermore, transformational leaders should use these

intentional practices to cultivate trusting, interactive, and inclusive relationships with their followers so all parties are included in the development and success of the organization (Berson & Stieglitz, 2013; Boekhorst, 2015; Burns, 2003; McMurray, 2010; Moua, 2010). This idea that creating a campus identity increases inclusion in the organization was reiterated when one participant discussed his own motive for creating a collective identity for the campus,

> It helps, that they all realize that they are going to be part of it all and they're all going to be the artists and you know whatever we paint on this painting, they're going to be part of it.

He asserted that this type of inclusion breeds engagement from constituents.

This theme was also coded for the element of inclusion in two artifacts and one observation. One of the artifacts came from a president's newsletter to constituents in which a list of goals was provided and asked to be given consideration for upcoming discussions. One of these goals was to "brand" the campus identity to demonstrate that they (campus employees) are culturally sensitive, inclusive, and welcoming. The theme was also coded from an observation when the researcher noted that the president showed flyers, brochures, and other printed materials with the new brand that the campus constituents had agreed upon less than a year before. The coding of these artifacts and observations added to the overall frequency of the theme.

Promoting feedback. Ten out of 10 presidents who participated in this study (100%) stated that promoting individual, group, campus, and community feedback is an imperative aspect of being an inclusive leader. This theme was referenced 23 times over 11 sources and represented 16% of the coded data for the element of inclusion.

Groysberg and Slind (2012) stated that inclusion builds upon components of intimacy and interactivity though its essence is full participation by all members of the organization. The authors went on to state that though it has the back-and-forth, reciprocal characteristics of interactivity, it goes a step further and ensures that individuals are able to express their own thoughts and ideas and that those thoughts and ideas will be welcomed in the planning and decision making of the college. One participant discussed the importance of feedback by stating,

> And that gives us an opportunity to take that feedback and work on things, sometimes in groups so the feedback continues and this is how we can move forward together. This is especially true by addressing those issues that people truly care about.

Another participant shared how important it is to promote feedback from constituents and to make sure that feedback is used to move the organization forward saying, "One group, in particular, is a planning committee that meets twice a month and this planning committee has all the various constituent groups on and it provides regular and ongoing feedback on the goals and directions for the organization."

One president relayed the importance of *promoting feedback* by ensuring that he is hearing and understanding the feedback received as it was intended. This participant also stated that he reframes and asks questions in regard to the feedback given. He gave an example, "So . . . stating . . . It does appear that this is what you would like to see happen." And confirming that by saying, "Let's hear your feedback on that. . . . Did we correctly reflect your wishes?" Doing this demonstrates that what people say matters."

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Furthermore, encouraging a culture of feedback increases engagement among organization members. Crowley (2011) asserted that employee engagement is one of the greatest predictors of an organization's efficiency and success and stated that 72% of highly engaged workers believe they do contribute to the success of the organization through input and feedback. One president conveyed the idea that every organization has areas that need adjustment and if multiple perspectives are not part of the feedback on those adjustments, appropriate and necessary changes cannot be made in a way that benefits the whole of the organization.

This theme was referenced through one artifact in which a campus president gave a convocation speech to the campus and said, "We will continue to engage the campus community and seek the input of faculty and staff in the development of the Facilities Master Plan." The coding of this artifact increased the overall frequency of this theme.

Allowing members of the organization to create or deliver organizational messages. This theme was referenced by nine of the 10 presidents and had a frequency of references of 19 over 12 sources. This theme accounted for 13% of the data coded for the conversational leadership element of inclusion. Groysberg and Slind (2012) proposed that successful leaders authorize and equip employees to speak on behalf of the organization in ways that are active and explicit. One president who participated in this study expressed that most messages come from campus employees and not directly from him. This participant shared that soon after becoming president of the college, a major development occurred where a unified message from the campus was necessary. As a result, he said,

I pulled several people together from the college to help write the message that we

wanted to send out to the entire college community, to students, to employees,

and our external folks as well. So we had to come up with a couple of different

approaches to the messaging. But it took a diverse team of people to really get

the message just right.

Groysberg and Slind (2012) also shared in the idea that it takes a number of people to

develop an organizational message and state that conversational inclusion is really about

conversational expansion, and employees should be able to contribute to the development

of the message and the delivery of the message.

Another president described how the campus was revising the mission statement

and goals of the organization. She explained that they held a campus wide retreat so all

constituents were part of the planning and design. The participant shared,

And that was the process we used to create the new mission statement and values

for the college. And I think it worked well, because people were included in the

entire process, not just in conversation, but in actually writing and doing work.

The final outcome was a collective effort.

One president shared in his interview that there are many times when he is very

knowledgeable about a topic, but as a leader, it is important to allow others to deliver the

message because they are also adept on the topic. He shared an example of this by

stating,

Well, so we were in a meeting this morning with the neighboring high school and

talking about dual enrollment. So it's a subject I know very well, but I turned to

the associate vice president of instruction who was in the meeting, and I said, why

don't you give the ABCs of dual enrollment to this group and how this will work

for this early college high school.

Groysberg and Slind (2012) proposed that letting employees provide the message to

others demonstrates that the leader has faith in the employee, which leads to a

relationship built on trust and respect.

Another president shared that it is important for engagement to let the employees

doing the work, create the processes, strategies, content and messaging related to that

work. She shared that she had an idea and went to a group and said, "I want to do this":

And they took it and they did it! Like, I didn't know they were going to make T-
shirts. I didn't know they were going to make stickers. I didn't know that they
were going to take it, where they took it. But, I let them make the vision theirs,
and by doing so they took it further than I had dreamed.

This theme was referenced and then coded in two artifacts and one observation.

One of the artifacts was directly related to an example given previously of a president

asking employees to take on a project and it surpassed her dreams. The artifact was an

invitation sent to the campus community for this project. The president reiterated that the

invitation and all of the details were completely created by the members of this group. In

addition, during an observation when the researcher went on a campus tour with the

president, the researcher noted that the president often asked staff from various divisions

and departments to explain their programs, services, new initiatives, building design,

histories, and other information. The president never provided the information for the

employees; rather, he continuously asked them to provide the messaging to the

researcher.

Instilling a sense of shared responsibility or ownership. This theme was referenced 19 times across eight sources and accounted for 13% of the coded content for the element of inclusion. Seventy percent of the participants in this study found this theme to be an important aspect of inclusion. Groysberg and Slind (2012) discussed the importance of a shared ownership in the organizations goals and strategies by all those employed in the organization. They called this process strategic alignment, by which all members are committed to achieving the mission, vision, and goals for the organization. One of the participant interviews shared this goal for strategic alignment when the president stated,

> One of the strategies [for achieving campus goals] is to help people understand that decision or the outcome of that, is one that they have a stake in. So, to help people feel like they are stakeholders in the outcome. It's not just the decisions that I make, but that the decisions I make are with input from them. And that's really important that they know they share in that.

> Seven out of the 10 participants made explicit comments in their interview, inferring that inclusion is also shared ownership and responsibility in the planning and decision making of the college. For instance, one participant stated, "It is important give your people a chance to have ownership and to have a mutual conversation, so that is not a dictatorship," while another commented, "And [to let them know], that's your role as a constituency group. If you want to be part of your campus governance, there is a shared responsibility." Furthermore, another participant shared his views on this by affirming the importance of inclusion and ownership by remarking, "Well, because we all have to own the success of the institution . . . we have to be on the same page, in terms of

creating the macro vision for the institution." Finally, another president added that there

is a shared responsibility even with difficult issues. She shared a story about being in a

budget deficit and the difficult decisions that had to be made as a result of that. She said

to her constituents,

> And so, with the budget reductions, if we're truly better together, then we're
>
> going to bring our collective wisdom together to figure out how to balance this
>
> budget as we move the college forward to the greatness that I know we possess.

One artifact was also coded in this theme, which added to the overall frequency.

This artifact was an invitation sent to the campus community to help in the development

of a new program initiative. The goal was to get shared ownership and feedback from

campus colleagues on how this initiative should move forward.

Hosting campus events that promote social behaviors between constituents.

This theme was referenced 15 times over nine sources and constituted 11% of the content

coded for this theme. Four of the 10 presidents discussed the importance of hosting and

being present at campus events to build an inclusive environment. Though the types of

events varied, which was also evident in the four artifacts coded for this theme, it was

still perceived by 40% of those interviewed as an important facet of inclusion. One

president revealed that he hosts a campus wide party at his home and invites all staff and

faculty. It has become a tradition that veteran employees look forward to and new

employees anticipate once hired. This participant feels that there is a bonding that

happens in social situations that may not happen otherwise. He also felt that it is

important to include everyone so that people who may never have the chance to interact

can do so at this social event. Though hosting a social event at home was not the

common response from participants, others also stated the importance of a campus event to bring people together.

Having a campus event is a forum in which to have fun, be social and meet college goals, making collegial bonds grow stronger. Organization members want to share a common experience or feel a common emotion with their leader and with others in the organization. Often, this experience can be an event or activity that the campus community shares in together. In fact, Rosen (2004) asked leaders to remember that the term common is found in both community and communication, which are the foundational aspects of conversational inclusion. As a result, having an inclusive event hosted by the campus can bring diverse groups together to share a common experience.

One president shared that when she was first hired, there was a campus reception for retirees, and she felt that she forged many bonds that day and had great conversations. Another president shared that she and her colleagues do a lot of work and that work can be hard at times even if it is work you love. This participant shared the importance of events and celebrations to keep people committed and engaged in the institution and to bring in some levity. She shared, "We have a lot of traditional events. We have just a lot of celebrations and we're rich in traditions." She also stated that these traditions and events allow the members of the organization to feel closer and included as a campus collective. Another president insisted,

> Campus events are where you can share your ideas and your thoughts. Let's say
> graduation is one of those events, or in our case we have two flex activities, we
> call it convocation in the fall and then we have another activity in the spring.

Essentially, it's a time for me to share with the college masses of what is going on

with the college, but it is also a time to be personal and socialize.

There were four artifacts and one observation coded to this theme under the

element of inclusion and increased the overall frequency. The artifacts are all

announcements or flyers for events being held on various campuses of the presidents who

participated in this study. During one observation, the researcher noted pictures of events

that occur in the summer time were displayed in the president's office. The president

insisted that people will be engaged if they feel connected to one another. This

participant feels that events like these instill a sense of camaraderie and family among

campus colleagues and students. He explained that at some of the campus summer

picnics, they have rented a dunk tank and hold a "Dunk a Dean" contest, where students

participate. He also attends these events so constituents can get to know him more

personally.

Providing a risk-free (safe) space. This theme was prevalent in six of the 10

presidents' interviews and was referenced 15 times over eight sources, accounting for

11% of the coded content for the element of inclusion. Providing a space where

constituents feels comfortable and safe is a very important aspect of inclusion. One

president remarked, "Transparency, open communication and a safe space to have

courageous conversations" is necessary for people to feel included. For example, in the

book, *Crucial Conversations,* Patterson et al. (2012) discussed a leader's responsibility in

providing a safe environment for difficult conversations and approaching the

conversations in a thoughtful way. They further stated that when employees feel safe to

speak openly and trust the motives and abilities of their leader, they are more likely to

engage and be productive even when topics are challenging. Providing a risk-free space also ensures that there is diversity of thoughts and ideas so many viewpoints are considered in organizational decision making. Furthermore, people are diverse in many ways, such as in age, gender, religion, culture, race, and abilities. Therefore, a conversationally adept leader will be aware of these differences and curtail conversations to ensure everyone is being included (Connell, 2010; Hurley & Brown, 2010; Nichols, 2012; Patterson et al, 2012). This behavior was evident through participant interviews. For example, one participant stated, "And now, of course, when you have conversations with these kinds of difficult issues or concerns, you work on having some ground rules and those ground rules are being civil and listening to what people have to say," while another participant shared,

> So I talk to them about the fact that you I don't have a problem with open dialogue and transparency, but if the dialogue is destructive and counterproductive . . . that I would adjourn any meeting because I was not going to tolerate incivility, or a lack of respect.

> One president shared that providing a safe space is about letting people get to know one another. She stated that when she first arrived at the campus, she knew that

> [People need time] to learn me and I have to develop that trust and I have to give people their space, to take the risk. There's a certain level of respect and civility, which I have real clear expectations about and the campus knows that and I'm clear about that.

She went on to state that the president has a role to emulate safe space behaviors so that others on the campus adopt those same behaviors. This participant also mentioned, "But

if someone says something that I don't like, or I disagree with it, it's just that situation. I don't hold on to it. I don't believe in retaliation or retribution. That is not part of my leadership." As a result, this president believes that providing ground rules and modeling behaviors for a safe space that fosters open and inclusive dialogue with diverse people is very important. However, she also insisted it is equally important to provide a safe space by not engaging in punitive behaviors over diverging perspectives or viewpoints.

There were also two artifacts coded for this theme under the element of inclusion. Both artifacts were district procedures that promoted inclusion and diversity and were found on president pages of the college website. One of these artifacts stated, "The district also assures that all employees and applicants for employment will enjoy equal opportunity regardless of race, color, ancestry, religion, gender, national origin, age, disability, medical condition, status as a Vietnam-era veteran, marital status, or sexual orientation."

Including key stakeholders in campus communications. Seven of 10 presidents participating in this study discussed the important of ensuring that employees or organizational members be brought into discussions in which they have a stake or expertise to contribute. This theme was referenced 11 times over seven sources and represented 8% of the data coded for the conversational leadership element of inclusion.

Seventy percent of the presidents interviewed suggested that the president has a role in making sure that various constituents are involved in the planning and decision making of the campus. For example, in an interview, one president relayed that to be inclusive, one has to employ a teamwork philosophy and went on to state,

The teamwork process, once we've set it up, it is then my goal to be sure it

happens and the proper information is there, and the right people are there to have

the discussion, and then all honor that process.

He added that campus employees are the experts in their fields and it is important to trust

their expertise and just as important to make sure they are included at the table, especially

when that expertise is needed.

Another interview with a president who participated in this study revealed that he

feels part of his responsibility is to make sure that people who should be part of the

campus discussion are. In fact, he stated that including all constituent groups in the

discussion is not only a transparent process but also assists in being inclusive by getting

the discussion out there so that more participate in the discussion. This participant shared

that at his campus, "The Faculty Senate, the Classified Senate, the Management team, the

student body association . . . they are all very engaged. And . . . these groups are given a

voice at our board of trustees meeting." This president confirmed that all key

stakeholders are included in campus communications.

One participant shared a recent experience with a new community college

initiative called guided pathways. He discussed how the campus communication has

been centered on faculty and instruction in regard to guided pathways, but he feels as

president he needs to make sure all the right players are part of the discussion. So, at a

faculty meeting, he introduced the topic of bringing the student services side of the house

more fully into the guided pathways planning and discussion. The president brought up

"onboarding students" as a critical aspect of guided pathways and then asked others in the

meeting to provide their perspective on this aspect. The president said the way to be

inclusive is to put the information out there, "so that you can bring people in, by them leading them down a path."

Boggs and McPhail (2016) discussed the role of campus leaders to create a cultural climate of diversity, equity, and inclusion on their campuses. In fact, Boggs and McPhail are experts in their own right and are both former community college presidents who expressed that inclusion means that institutions must shift from focusing on student and employee demographics and now focus on transforming attitudes, behaviors, policies, and practices. When the campus adopts inclusive behaviors, all stakeholders are included and engaged in the mission, values, and goals of the college. The literature is in agreement by asserting that the inclusion of all organization members in the decision making leads to better outcomes for the organization (Glaser, 2014; Gurteen, 2015; Kegan & Lahey, 2001; Meng, 2015; Ruben & Gigliotti, 2016; Wolper, 2016).

One participant who was interviewed summed up the importance of including key stakeholders by changing the way her cabinet meetings take place:

> I decided to, once a month, have an expanded cabinet meeting and invite other folks to come also. And I'm trying to develop agendas that provide them the opportunity to share information with all of us, and the VPs are in the room. And there are others. There's too many serial conversations and not enough group conversations among all these people. So far, it works well.

Another president proposed that it is his and his executive team's responsibility to get all the constituents groups involved with the planning and development of the college. In his meetings with his executive team, he says, "So, let's make sure that we talk about and think about what strategy we can use to get more voices around this plan."

Sending out consistent and regular communications to stakeholders. Half of all participants interviewed made reference to the importance of sending out consistent and regular communication. This theme was referenced a total of 10 times across eight sources and accounted for 7% of the data coded for the element of inclusion.

One participant interviewed for this study shared the belief that communication coming from leadership has to be consistent and in many different forms to promote inclusive practices. For example,

> We have a monthly communication from me that goes out by e-mail to all faculty and staff along with others. We communicate on an ongoing basis with forums, with the annual convocation as well as working with all the deans, so that we are all on the same page.

Another participant who also referred to consistent messaging as important to getting all stakeholders to be on the same page stated,

> I, mean, do we try to make sure that everybody has a consistent message they're taking with them? I think I would have to say that with all that we're talking about, there are pieces of what you hope results in exactly this, a consistent message.

Consistent messaging from leadership also lends itself to consistent messaging from constituents. Groysberg and Slind (2012) proposed that inclusive leaders trust their constituents to engage in the messaging for the campus and empower them by providing consistent avenues for campus communication practices. Presidents who participated in this study concur that modeling communication practices regularly increases the

likelihood that constituents will emulate those communication behaviors and become the ambassadors of the campus message to the outside world.

Providing members of the organization an opportunity to showcase their expertise. This theme was referenced by five of the 10 participants for this study and referenced overall seven times over six sources and made up 5% of the content coded for this element. Employees want to derive purpose from the work that they do and this may not be found in their duties alone, but in the relationships, camaraderie, recognition, and achievement they experience while performing these duties (Berson & Stieglitz, 2013; Crowley, 2011; Mautz, 2015). Therefore, providing employees an opportunity to highlight their talents and to showcase their expertise is a critical aspect of inclusion and engagement. In an interview with one of the participants in this study, the president revealed that in an effort to assist employees in demonstrating their expertise,

> I might go out of my way knowing, again knowing a little bit about everyone, [and say to someone] "don't you have a special interest in this? . . . And then they kind of go . . . oh this is in my wheelhouse. So I try and lead them to a comfort zone in which they can launch into their expertise.

Groysberg and Slind (2012) shared the importance of shining a light on employees and allowing their contributions and talents to be visible to others in the organization. The authors concluded that doing this will increase employee engagement both inside and outside of the organization.

One president explained that there are times when top leadership are not the experts on a topic and need to include the employees who are so that well-informed decisions can be made. He gave the example of when a fire in the community led to the

temporary closure of child care centers. His campus also had a child care center, and the upper administration suggested closing it as well. However, the president called in the child care center director to provide her expertise and feedback. The decision was to leave the child care center open because the expertise of the director demonstrated that it would be safer to have the children at the child care center rather than out in the community, and it would assist student parents' ability to concentrate on their finals.

A president interviewed for this study stated, "We know that we have folks that have specific expertise and that we need to support it," while another president shared,

> And I told them I wanted to make sure that they get the credit for the development and implementation of this initiative. I may of had a vision, but they have made it what it is and they are the experts, not me.

Both of these presidents expressed how morale, engagement, and job satisfaction becomes much more likely when employees' expertise and talent are acknowledged and valued by the institution. These sentiments were mirrored by Brun and Dugas (2008) as they proposed that employee recognition leads to employees feeling appreciated by their team, and this creates job satisfaction. Furthermore, they postulated that job satisfaction has an immediate impact on organizational productivity and performance. Therefore, this theme contends that leaders use these inclusive conversational practices to recognize the valuable contributions and expertise of their members.

Intentionality

Intentionality was defined by the thematic research team as ensuring clarity of purpose that includes goals and direction to create order and meaning with the use of conversation (Barge, 1985; Groysberg & Slind, 2012; Men, 2012). After the coding of

the participant interviews, six themes emerged in relation to the conversational element

of interactivity. This element carried the least number of themes and references but still

accounted for 17% of the data coded across all four elements of conversational

leadership: intimacy, interactivity, inclusion, and intentionality. Table 6 identifies the six

themes of intentionality and the number of sources that were referenced for each theme

along with total frequency of the references.

Table 6. *Intentionality Themes*

Intentionality themes	Interview sources	Observation sources	Artifact sources	Total sources	Frequency	% of data within element	% of total data
Using professional development activities to promote the mission, vision, and goals	7	0	3	10	23	25%	4%
Repeating messages related to the goals, vision, and mission	6	0	8	14	22	24%	4%
Introducing topics that are pertinent to the goals of the organization	8	3	0	11	16	17%	3%
Using strategic planning documents to guide conversations	5	0	3	8	12	13%	2%
Creating opportunities to meet and talk with members of the organization	5	0	2	7	11	12%	2%
Promoting organizational goals through collaborative conversations	6	1	0	7	9	10%	2%

Using professional development activities to promote the mission, vision, and goals. This theme emerged after seven of the 10 participants of this study recognized professional development activities as a tool to have employees participate in the mission, vision, and goals of the organization. It was referenced 23 times across 10 sources and represented 25% of the coded content for the conversational element of intentionality.

One president stated that it is important to have members participate in the conversation, but it is equally important that they are equipped to take part in conversations regarding campus planning. As a result, this participant stated,

> The people that participate have to be educated and trained. You can't ask somebody to give you recommendations about workforce programs if they don't know anything about workforce programs. So these committees, while the people on them are intentionally chosen by our leadership groups, if we get people on there that need training, we do the training so they understand what's happening. So professional development training is important.

Providing professional development training for employees is done intentionally by leaders to have a prepared workforce capable of the necessary input needed for planning, decision making, and subsequent action.

In fact, experts Berson and Stieglitz (2013) suggested, "The purpose of building relationships, developing others, and making decisions is to set up the stage for effective action, because at the end of the day, only action produces results" (p. 241). Providing appropriate professional development training addresses the organization's ability to make well-informed decisions and to take action on those decisions with an equipped

workforce. The element of intentionality is also about closing the loop on intimacy, interactivity, and inclusion, so having professional development activities focused on preparing organizational members is an important aspect in getting them comfortable enough to contribute to intentional conversations focused on the mission, vision, and goals.

For instance, one president stated in his interview,

And, so part of the purpose of training is to provide another means for people to be engaged and involved in the direction that the college is going. So we use that professional development intentionally to get deeper into implementing change.

Another president agreed with this premise by sharing that professional development is key in getting employees prepared to share in the responsibility of completing campus objectives. For example, this president expressed,

Well first thing, for faculty, we have what we call our faculty success center and this facility is run by faculty and has a number of ways in which faculty can engage themselves in professional development, and even has a teaching pedagogy which establishes ways to communicate with one another . . . it prepares faculty to understand foundational goals and the mission of the college.

Furthermore, several participants of this study mentioned having specific campus retreats (a professional development activity) focused on the mission and goals of the college. One president said, "I meet with all the college constituents once a month and I have retreats with them once a year to set the tone for the semester and how to move the college forward," while another president stated, "We start the campus conversations and

we bring everyone together . . . we have a planning retreat every year to discuss these things [campus goals]."

Another president stated that she hired an outside consultant to conduct a professional development leadership training. She relayed that it was a 3-day training with classified, faculty, and junior administrators; the purpose was to increase leadership capabilities across the campus and prepare employees to take a more active role in the campus development.

There were also three artifacts coded to this theme, which increased the over frequency of the theme. These artifacts were all related to professional development activities endorsed by the campus presidents as a way to engage employees in the mission, vision, and goals of the campus. One of these artifacts was an invitation from the president to campus employees to attend the BLOOM (Bringing Light to Ourselves and Others through Multiculturalism) training, which is aimed at meeting an equity and inclusion goal contained in their strategic planning. This president discussed how the goals of equity and inclusion cannot be achieved if employees do not fully comprehend what equity and inclusion are. Therefore, this professional development activity was an intentional strategy to bring everyone into the conversation surrounding equity and inclusion and to provide more clarity so goals could be achieved.

Repeating messages related to the goals, vision, and mission. Sixty percent of the exemplary leaders interviewed in this study referenced that intentionally repeating messages related to the campus goals, vision, and mission were an important strategy for continuing on an-going collaborative conversation. This theme was referenced 22 times across 14 sources and accounted for 24% of the coded content for the conversational

element of intentionality. Groysberg and Slind (2012) recognized the importance of leaders guiding conversations toward organizational goals, and in order to prevent misalignment, leaders need to regularly, extensively, and intentionally communicate the strategic vision of the organization. Feltz (2009) furthered Groysberg and Slind's recommendation by stating that it is only when leaders are intentional and every action, behavior, and decision is clearly defined by an outcome that each employee will have a clear understanding of the organization's goals, purpose, expectations, and needs. Therefore, since the college mission, vision, and goals provide employees with campus purpose, it provides additional clarity so employees can align their own duties to this purpose.

For example, during an interview for this study with a community college president, he expressed that the way he builds trust, maintains good conversation, and good communication across the whole organization is by speaking repeatedly on the mission and vision of the institution. He articulated that he mentions the mission of the college often, whether it is in a campus speech, at a retreat, during convocation, in meetings, or interactions with constituent groups. This same president shared that he says the campus vision statement so often that it has become somewhat of a joke, but he continues to say it so that everyone will know it and be invested in it.

Another president conveyed that he repeats the campus mission statement even in the presence of community partners so they will know it and understand the focus of the college. Furthermore, one president communicated that the campus mission is intentionally brought into his conversations repeatedly because "my conversation with the campus is to help people focus on the mission of the college and how everybody from

the groundskeepers, to the president's office, are in charge of the six-student success factors." This president also shared that these six student success factors have been placed on the college website and stated in meetings and presentations, are located on the faculty syllabi, and have been posted on flyers throughout the campus so each constituent group is completely aware of what they are and how they fit in to achieving them.

Another president insisted that as the CEO of the institution, it is his responsibility to ensure each member of the organization understands the purpose of the institution, not only to unify the members, but also to increase the likelihood that they are collaborating in reaching its goals. He stated,

> I do this at the convocations at the beginning of every semester. I review the college vision, the mission, and values, and the college goals. It's a constant reminder . . . you got to repeat, repeat, repeat. You never get away from it.

There were eight artifacts coded for this theme under the element of intentionality and added to the overall frequency of the theme. In fact, this theme had more artifacts coded to it than all of the other artifacts coded for various themes in this study. Most of these artifacts were found on campus websites, president biographies, and communications sent out from presidents and they all referenced the mission, vision, and goals of the organization.

Introducing topics that are pertinent to the goals of the organization. Eight of 10 presidents who participated in this study mentioned that they intentionally introduce topics in various forums to guide the conversation around the goals of the organization. This theme was referenced 16 times over 11 sources and represented 17% of the data coded for the conversational element of intentionality. Groysberg and Slind (2012)

conveyed that the main point of fostering dialogue within a company is to improve its

internal and external performance. Therefore, they suggested that leaders intentionally

orient the flow of conversation to an agenda that supports the goals of the organization.

Eighty percent of the exemplary leaders interviewed in this study agreed with Groysberg

and Slind and believed the president has a role in guiding the campus conversation

toward the goals of the institution.

For instance, one president commented on his approach for guiding the

conversation,

> The approach that I like to use is . . . here's the issue and here is the background
>
> and here's what I think we ought to be thinking about. And then have a
>
> [dialogue] back and forth and then showing that I'm listening to those who are
>
> working with me and they are also listening.

Another president shared,

> So, even if something comes out from the state, I'm going to say . . . you know
>
> what, the state is saying this is the direction we need to take, so I would like all
>
> the heads of departments who want to provide input get their various groups
>
> together and we will review these things together and look at the feedback.

Another president shared that she is very intentional about introducing topics and

explained,

> Well I gave them homework, or pre-work before the meeting, and I had them read
>
> a couple of research briefs. One was on "How to leverage more out of your
>
> relationships with your high schools" and the other one was on "how to recapture
>
> adult learners." That's a declining market area. So we all read short, couple of

page, research briefs from a group (an organization we belong to a research group) and then I created some questions. So during that expanded cabinet meeting, we all discussed the questions that I had come up with about those readings and what it meant for us as a group. So, it was a way to bring this expanded cabinet together for the first time and focus on something that we could all engage in conversation around and that focused on issues pertinent to the campus.

There were also three observations coded to this theme, which increased its overall frequency. The researcher noted the intentional behaviors and actions of presidents during the observations. During one observation, the president shared some of the articles that she has provided to her executive team as homework. She asks them to read the articles (things on student success college pathways, and more) so they can have discussions on how they can utilize the data or create programs, and so forth. She does this intentionally as the information is something she wants the group to focus on, but she feels it helps if the perspective of the topic is not coming directly from her; rather, it has research behind it. In another observation, the president mentioned that he hosts an executive team day, for which he creates an agenda focused on having the administrators and managers fully discuss college goals, mission, and vision.

Using strategic planning documents to guide conversations. This theme was referenced 12 times across eight sources and accounted for 13% of the content coded for the element of intentionality. Fifty percent of presidents who participated in this study noted that they intentionally develop or guide campus conversations through strategic planning documents. Though this is similar to the theme of *introducing topics that are*

pertinent to the goals of the organization, it differs in that the conversation is specific to the strategic planning documents and processes. For example, one president summed up how strategic planning is used to guide conversations by commenting in her interview, "The strategic planning meetings involved a lot of different areas of the college, and a lot of constituents across the college, and it also requires some subgroups. These kinds of things take time, and people have to be patient through a process like this. So strategic planning is one of the ways that keep people involved in the college wide conversation." Another president demonstrated through the interview that she felt that strategic planning documents are what bring clarity and focus to the mission and goals of the college when she stated,

> Well I think we use conversation around creating clarity and purpose when we are
> doing strategic planning and I also have to do it every semester at the start of the
> semester to make sure we're all going in the same direction.

Groysberg and Slind (2012) asserted that leaders need to align employees to strategic planning through a collaborative and intentional practice.

One president shared that having groups work on the strategic plan together provides multifaceted levels of input into campus planning and provides direction for the college to move in. For example, this president explained,

> I've done it in the way that I put together the team that led the review of our
> strategic plan and they ultimately identified their recommendations to me and
> then when I have the recommendations from that plan, I send out a major
> communication to the college as a whole to elicit further feedback.

This is a way to keep all members of the organization in the loop by intentionally

bringing clarity of purpose to the college goals through the strategic planning process.

There were three artifacts coded to this theme, adding to the overall frequency.

One of those artifacts was found on the college website sharing the most recent

reiteration of the strategic plan and included a statement that read: "Like all community

colleges, [name of] College faces new challenges and opportunities every day." To deal

effectively with these challenges and to develop a meaningful road map to guide it over

the next years, the college has developed its latest strategic plan. This artifact was

indicative of the theme as were the other two artifacts, which were both related to

strategic planning documents found on college websites.

Creating opportunities to meet and talk with members of the organization.

This theme was referenced 11 times across seven sources and made up 12% of the data

coded for the conversational element of intentionality. Five of the 10 presidents

interviewed for this study intimated that if intentional conversations are going to occur,

the president needs to create opportunities to meet and talk with members of the

organization, especially members with whom they are neither on shared governance

committees nor have regular interactions. Therefore, these conversations must include

everyone so that each employee, no matter his or her role, develops personal goals that

meet and further the objectives of the organization. Barge, Downs, and Johnson (2016)

concluded that strategic leaders have an obligation to help all employees make sense of

organizational goals and to motivate them to take ownership in achieving them.

Therefore, part of being strategic and intentional is to create opportunities through which

the president can meet with more constituents. Some presidents shared that they use

multiple approaches in creating these opportunities, such as open forums, town halls, one-on-one meetings, open office hours, campus events, retreats, and even walking about campus.

One president asserted, "Sometimes you have to engage people that wouldn't . . . you know . . . normally speak up. I always do that. I look for ways to do that." Another president mentioned his strategy for engaging others in conversation, "And you know, I walk the campus and do whatever activities are out there and be visible and accessible." Another president also believes it is her job to be present at events and activities so she can meet and talk with campus constituents. She commented during her interview, "When I joined the college, there was lots of opportunities for me to get out and meet people, and I was intentional about that because I wanted to get to know people in the campus community."

One president explained that he goes to the constituents rather than waiting for them to come to him. He shared,

> The student government president and I, we go around to all of our campuses, to have open dialogue at least once a semester. And that allows me and the student body president, who is also the trustee, to interact with anyone in a very informal setting so we can hear the concerns they have about the college and I can also share information with them.

In addition, another president stated that it is important to host events so constituents can attend in a more casual atmosphere, yet still allow for strategic conversation. He conveyed this idea:

And you have to hold a different venue for different constituents so they have a

chance to interact with me and then you have to make sure that it is a two-way

interaction and that I'm not going with only my agenda, but also listening to what

their agenda may be and what items they have share.

There were two artifacts coded to this theme, increasing its frequency. Both

artifacts mirrored the examples provided by the interviews. One of the artifacts was a

speech given at convocation by one of the presidents who participated in this study. In

this speech the president shared how he takes daily walks so they he can interact with the

campus community. He shared information about his walks with a little levity, "On my

daily walks around campus—as many of you know, I love to walk and I have my trusty

Fitbit monitor here to prove it." As a result of five interviews and two artifacts coded to

this element, exemplary community college presidents concurred that it is a responsibility

of the president to create opportunities to meet and talk with all campus constituents.

Promoting organizational goals through collaborative conversations. This

theme was referenced nine times across seven sources and represented 10% of the coded

content for the conversational leadership element on intentionality. Sixty percent of the

participants interviewed in this study mentioned the benefit of intentionally having

collaborative conversations to promote the organizational goals of the college. Since one

facet of intentionality focuses on the goals and direction of the organization to create

order and meaning with the use of conversation (Barge, 1985; Groysberg & Slind, 2012;

Men, 2012), the participants of this study agreed that collaborative conversations with

constituents allow for the greatest attention to the goals and direction of the organization.

One president who was interviewed conveyed the importance of these collaborative conversations as a means to meet campus objectives. He stated,

I mean, we've had all kinds of conversations on campus that are focused around data and how we are going to do this or that. And, we have the faculty group, the student body group, the staff group, and everybody has come together to have a meaningful conversation on how we're going to serve students. I mean, that is the ultimate goal.

Another president stated that goals must be accomplished through teamwork and the collaboration between employees. He shared, "So we use this this teamwork system to provide recommendations for most major decisions on campus. We do this intentionally, because it works." Groysberg and Slind (2012) shared that intentional leaders bring employees together in a way that separates them from their individual roles inside the organization and creates a collaborative group-think atmosphere. They provided the example of having a professional development activity by which topics are introduced and then people are broken down in smaller teams to have conversations about these topics and to problem solve collaboratively. In an interview, one president aligned with Groysberg and Slind, mentioned campus retreats as way to bring in all different constituents to work collaboratively as a team on organization goals. He shared that during the retreat, employees are separated in small groups using the last two digits of their phone numbers so that team members are not all from the same constituency group. He suggested that this is when real collaborative conversation begins, and there are focused activities that promote further collaboration in planning and implementing campus goals.

This theme was coded in one observation when the researcher witnessed and noted the president encouraging a collaborative discussion regarding a guided pathway initiative. The coding of this theme added to the frequency of the conversational leadership element intentionality.

Sixty percent of the exemplary leaders interviewed for this study demonstrated that they have intentional strategies to promote organizational goals through collaborative conversations. These behaviors also correlate with the information available in the literature and provided by experts in relation to conversational leadership.

Key Findings

After the researcher coded all the data from interview transcripts, observations, and artifacts, 30 themes emerged, demonstrating how exemplary community college presidents lead their organizations using the four elements of conversation leadership: inclusion, interactivity, inclusion, and interactivity. In order to ascertain key findings, the researcher developed criteria to identify the most common behaviors exhibited by these presidents across the four elements of conversational leadership. Therefore, 17 key findings were identified after two of the three following criteria were met:

1. Data frequencies were 15 or higher.

2. Seventy percent of the participants referenced the theme.

3. The theme represented 20% or more of the coded content within an element.

Table 7 demonstrates how the 17 key findings were identified after establishing the above criteria.

Table 7. *Establishing Key Findings*

Element	Theme	# of participants	Frequency	% of data coded	# of criteria met
Intimacy	Sharing stories as a way to bond with others	9	45	26%	3
Intimacy	Being genuine, authentic, and transparent	9	37	22%	3
Intimacy	Actively listening to members of the organization	9	25	15%	2
Intimacy	Celebrating or acknowledging others' contributions	7	22	13%	2
Intimacy	Being accessible and approachable to members of the organization	7	17	10%	2
Intimacy	Acting upon messages received to build trust	8	15	9%	2
Interactivity	Encouraging open dialogue	10	25	24%	3
Interactivity	Having one-on-one meetings or open office hours	8	15	10%	2
Interactivity	Asking thoughtful questions as a means to engage others	7	15	10%	2
Interactivity	Using institutional processes to encourage collaboration	7	15	10%	2
Inclusion	Promoting feedback	10	23	16%	2
Inclusion	Allowing members of the organization to create or deliver organizational messages	9	19	13%	2
Inclusion	Creating a collective identity for the organization (branding)	8	23	16%	2

Table 7 (*continued*)

Element	Theme	# of participants	Frequency	% of data coded	# of criteria met
Inclusion	Instilling a sense of shared responsibility or ownership	7	19	13%	2
Intentionality	Using professional development activities to promote the mission, vision, and goals	7	23	25%	3
Intentionality	Introducing topics that are pertinent to the goals of the organization	8	16	17%	2
Intentionality	Repeating messages related to the goals, vision, and mission	6	22	24%	2

Intimacy as a Key Finding

1. Sharing stories as a way to bond with others was referenced by nine of the 10 participants (90%) and accounted for 26% of the data coded for the element of intimacy. Furthermore, this theme had the highest frequency, being referenced 45 times.

2. Being genuine, authentic, and transparent was referenced by nine of the 10 participants (90%) and accounted for 22% of the data coded for the element of intimacy. This theme was referenced 37 times.

3. Actively listening to members of the organization was referenced by nine of the 10 participants (90%) and accounted for 15% of the data coded for the element of intimacy. This theme was referenced 25 times.

4. Celebrating or acknowledging others' contributions was referenced by seven of the 10 participants (70%) and accounted for 13% of the data coded for the element of intimacy. This theme was referenced 22 times.

5. Being accessible and approachable to members of the organization was referenced by seven of the 10 participants (70%) and accounted for 10% of the data coded for the element of intimacy. This theme was referenced 17 times.

6. Acting upon messages received to build trust was referenced by eight of the 10 participants (80%) and accounted for 9% of the data coded for the element of intimacy. This theme was referenced 15 times.

Interactivity as a Key Finding

1. Encouraging open dialogue was referenced by 10 of the 10 participants (100%) and accounted for 24% of the data coded for the element of interactivity. This theme was referenced 25 times.

2. Having one-on-one meetings or open office hours was referenced by eight of the 10 participants (80%) and accounted for 10% of the data coded for the element of interactivity. This theme was referenced 15 times.

3. Asking thoughtful questions as a means to engage others was referenced by seven of the 10 participants (70%) and accounted for 10% of the data coded for the element of interactivity. This theme was referenced 15 times.

4. Using institutional practices to encourage collaboration was referenced by seven of the 10 participants (70%) and accounted for 10% of the data coded for the element of interactivity. This theme was referenced 15 times.

Inclusion as a Key Finding

1. Promoting feedback was referenced by 10 of the 10 participants (100%) and accounted for 16% of the data coded for the element of inclusion. This theme was referenced 23 times.

2. Allowing members of the organization to create or deliver organizational messages was referenced by nine of the 10 participants (90%) and accounted for 13% of the data coded for the element of inclusion. This theme was referenced 19 times.

3. Creating a collective identity for the organization (branding) was referenced by eight of the 10 participants (80%) and accounted for 16% of the data coded for the element of inclusion. This theme was referenced 23 times.

4. Instilling a sense of shared responsibility or ownership was referenced by seven of the 10 participants (70%) and accounted for 13% of the data coded for the element of inclusion. This theme was referenced 19 times.

Intentionality as a Key Finding

1. Using professional development activities to promote the mission, vision, and goals was referenced by seven of the 10 participants (70%) and accounted for 25% of the data coded for the element of intentionality. This theme was referenced 23 times.

2. Introducing topics that are pertinent to the goals of the organization was referenced by eight of the 10 participants (80%) and accounted for 17% of the data coded for the element of intentionality. This theme was referenced 16 times.

3. Repeating messages related to the goals, vision, and mission was referenced by six of the 10 participants (60%) and accounted for 24% of the data coded for the element of intentionality. This theme was referenced 22 times.

Summary

The purpose of this phenomenological research study was to describe the

behaviors that exemplary community college presidents practice to lead their

organizations through conversation as depicted by Groysberg and Slind's (2012) four

elements of conversational leadership: intimacy, interactivity, inclusion, and

intentionality. Chapter IV provided a summary of the data that were collected from 10

interviews with exemplary community college presidents, three observations of the

participants, and 31 artifacts that were collected to triangulate the data from interviews.

After the data were coded, 30 themes emerged across the four elements of conversational

leadership. During analysis of the 30 themes, 17 key findings were used to describe the

behaviors that exemplary community college presidents practice to lead their

organizations through conversation.

Chapter V offers a final summary of the research study. This summary includes

major findings, unexpected findings, conclusions, and implications for action. In

addition, Chapter V also shares recommendations for further research and considerations

and reflections from the researcher.

CHAPTER V: FINDINGS, CONCLUSIONS, AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Chapter V provides a summary of this research study while also restating the purpose of the study and the research questions. In addition, the major findings of this research study are presented, which also include unexpected findings, conclusions, implications for action, and recommendations for future research. Finally, Chapter V concludes with the researcher's own reflections from this study.

The purpose of this phenomenological research study was to describe the behaviors that exemplary community college presidents practice to lead their organizations through conversation as depicted by Groysberg and Slind's (2012) four elements of conversational leadership: intimacy, interactivity, inclusion, and intentionality. This study yielded one central research question and four subquestions. Each of the four subquestions addressed one of the four elements of conversation. For example, the central question was, "What are the behaviors that exemplary community college presidents practice to lead their organizations through conversation using Groysberg and Slind's four elements of conversational leadership: intimacy, interactivity, inclusion, and intentionality?" Furthermore, the four subquestions were as follows:

1. How do exemplary community college presidents lead their organizations through the conversation element of intimacy?

2. How do exemplary community college presidents lead their organizations through the conversation element of interactivity?

3. How do exemplary community college presidents lead their organizations through the conversation element of inclusion?

4. How do exemplary community college presidents lead their organizations through the conversation element of intentionality?

It was through this qualitative, phenomenological study that the researcher described the lived experiences of 10 exemplary community college presidents in Southern California who led their organizations using the four elements of conversational leadership (intimacy, interactivity, inclusion, and intentionality). This study was designed in collaboration with a thematic team of 12 peer researchers and four expert faculty. Each peer researcher used the same criteria to identify 10 exemplary leaders. For example, exemplary leaders were defined as ones who are set apart from peers by exhibiting at least four of the following characteristics: (a) evidence of successful relationships with followers; (b) evidence of leading the organization successfully; (c) a minimum of 5 years of experience in the profession; (d) articles, papers, or materials written, published, or presented at conferences or association meetings; (e) recognized by their peers; or (f) membership in professional associations within their field.

Although the same criteria were used to delineate exemplary leaders, the 12 peer researchers' target populations varied from one another. For example, target populations included regional directors of migrant education, chief nursing officers, city managers, nonprofit executive directors, municipal police chiefs and sheriffs, elementary and unified school district superintendents, assistant superintendents of educational services, principals, and community college presidents.

For the purposes of this study, 10 exemplary community college presidents were identified through the criteria formulated by the thematic team and also by another factor, which was to identify exemplary community college presidents in California of single-

college districts. This additional criterion was used as a recommendation from a faculty expert and former community college president who also had a leadership role as the vice chancellor for the California Community Colleges Chancellor's Office (CCCCO). This recommendation was made after the researcher discovered that more community college presidents qualified as potential participants than the number needed for a qualitative, phenomenological research design. As a result, identifying presidents from single-college districts was used as a delimiting factor and also as a way to further align potential participants by having them share similar organizational environments.

Therefore, the target population for this study was the 114 community college presidents located throughout the state of California (CCCCO, n.d.); however, the sample was narrowed to the 10 exemplary community college presidents from single-college districts in the state of California.

The collection of data was gathered through 10 participant interviews, three observations, and 31 artifacts. The interview instrument was developed in collaboration with the thematic research team and resulted in 12 open-ended, semistructured questions designed to explore the lived experiences of the study participants in relation to their conversational leadership behaviors. Using three sources of data increased the reliability of the study through a process referred to as triangulation. After coding the data using NVivo software, 30 themes emerged across the four elements of conversational leadership. There were seven themes for intimacy, eight themes for interactivity, nine themes for inclusion, and six themes for intentionality. Further analysis of the 30 themes revealed 17 key findings.

Major Findings

The intent of this research study was to describe the lived experiences of exemplary community college presidents who lead their organizations by practicing the four elements of conversational leadership: intimacy, interactivity, inclusion, and intentionality. Chapter IV provided an analysis of data in an effort to answer this study's central research question and the four subquestions. Each of the four subquestions was designed with a concentration specific to each one of the four elements of conversational leadership. Results from the data established that the 10 exemplary community college presidents who participated in this study demonstrated leadership behaviors across all four elements of conversational leadership. In addition, after additional analysis of the data, 17 key findings emerged across the 30 themes. These key findings were also presented in Chapter IV and were determined by meeting two of the following three criteria:

1. Data frequencies were 15 or higher.

2. Seventy percent or more of the participants referenced the theme.

3. The theme represented 20% or more of the coded content within an element.

Intimacy as a Key Finding

1. Sharing stories as a way to bond with others was referenced by nine of the 10 participants (90%) and accounted for 26% of the data coded for the element of intimacy. Furthermore, this theme had the highest frequency, being referenced 45 times.

2. Being genuine, authentic, and transparent was referenced by nine of the 10 participants (90%) and accounted for 22% of the data coded for the element of intimacy. This theme was referenced 37 times.

3. Actively listening to members of the organization was referenced by nine of the 10 participants (90%) and accounted for 15% of the data coded for the element of intimacy. This theme was referenced 25 times.

4. Celebrating or acknowledging others' contributions was referenced by seven of the 10 participants (70%) and accounted for 13% of the data coded for the element of intimacy. This theme was referenced 22 times.

5. Being accessible and approachable to members of the organization was referenced by seven of the 10 participants (70%) and accounted for 10% of the data coded for the element of intimacy. This theme was referenced 17 times.

6. Acting upon messages received to build trust was referenced by eight of the 10 participants (80%) and accounted for 9% of the data coded for the element of intimacy. This theme was referenced 15 times.

Interactivity as a Key Finding

1. Encouraging open dialogue was referenced by 10 of the 10 participants (100%) and accounted for 24% of the data coded for the element of interactivity. This theme was referenced 25 times.

2. Having one-on-one meetings or open office hours was referenced by eight of the 10 participants (80%) and accounted for 10% of the data coded for the element of interactivity. This theme was referenced 15 times.

3. Asking thoughtful questions as a means to engage others was referenced by seven of the 10 participants (70%) and accounted for 10% of the data coded for the element of interactivity. This theme was referenced 15 times.

4. Using institutional practices to encourage collaboration was referenced by seven of the 10 participants (70%) and accounted for 10% of the data coded for the element of interactivity. This theme was referenced 15 times.

Inclusion as a Key Finding

1. Promoting feedback was referenced by 10 of the 10 participants (100%) and accounted for 16% of the data coded for the element of inclusion. This theme was referenced 23 times.

2. Allowing members of the organization to create or deliver organizational messages was referenced by nine of the 10 participants (90%) and accounted for 13% of the data coded for the element of inclusion. This theme was referenced 19 times.

3. Creating a collective identity for the organization (branding) was referenced by eight of the 10 participants (80%) and accounted for 16% of the data coded for the element of inclusion. This theme was referenced 23 times.

4. Instilling a sense of shared responsibility or ownership was referenced by seven of the 10 participants (70%) and accounted for 13% of the data coded for the element of inclusion. This theme was referenced 19 times.

Intentionality as a Key Finding

1. Using professional development activities to promote the mission, vision, and goals was referenced by seven of the 10 participants (70%) and accounted for 25% of the data coded for the element of intentionality. This theme was referenced 23 times.

2. Introducing topics that are pertinent to the goals of the organization was referenced by eight of the 10 participants (80%) and accounted for 17% of the data coded for the element of intentionality. This theme was referenced 16 times.

3. Repeating messages related to the goals, vision, and mission was referenced by six of the 10 participants (60%) and accounted for 24% of the data coded for the element of intentionality. This theme was referenced 22 times.

Unexpected Findings

This study resulted in one unexpected finding relating to the element of interactivity and one unexpected finding relating to the element of intentionality. The unexpected finding in relation to interactivity was based on the use of communication technology. For instance, throughout the study of conversational leadership, Groysberg and Slind (2012) continually mentioned the use of technology as an important aspect of an inclusive and interactive dialogue in the 21st-century workforce. The authors specifically referred to the use of technological mechanisms for communication when organizational leaders have difficulty meeting with members regularly and in-person by having face-to-face, bilateral, or multilateral interaction. In addition, much of the literature contended that as we become a global economy and workforce, technology must be utilized by leaders so they can communicate regularly and interactively with employees (Groysberg & Slind, 2012; Koo et al., 2011; Stephen & Barrett, 2016). In fact, a shared sentiment in the literature asserts that technology can assist in providing a forum for people to brainstorm and provide input (Koo, et al., 2011; Stephen & Barrett, 2016). As a result, the use of communication technology was mentioned as a secondary strategy after in-person meetings that allows for a bilateral or multilateral conversation

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(Groysberg & Slind, 2012; Koo et al., 2011). However, this use of technology did not develop as a theme among the community college presidents participating in this study. Although six of the 10 presidents referenced *providing multiple modes of communication* to constituents, there was very little mention of using wikis, blogs, skype, video chat, or other means of bilateral or multilateral uses of communication technology to have interactive dialogues with constituents. In fact, when videos were referenced, it was by presidents who sent a message out to constituents using video, but it was not interactive or fluid where the presidents could receive messages back.

As a result, it appears that community college presidents do not regularly use these types of communication technologies mentioned by experts. It is not clear whether this is a result of having institutional policies set in place, such as committee structures and other shared governance processes that ensure face-to-face, inclusive, and interactive discussions among organizational members in relation to the planning, development, and decision making of the organization or that the institution of higher education has yet to adopt these technological mechanisms as conversation strategies. Furthermore, the average age of the presidents (63 years) who participated in this study may be a contributing factor since most spent the majority of their careers without these technological advancements. Whatever its origin, it is an unexpected finding that communication technologies were not frequently referenced by community college presidents as a conduit to having bilateral or multilateral conversations across campus.

The other unexpected finding was based on the percentage of data gathered and analyzed in relation to each element of conversational leadership. For instance, intimacy made up 31% of the coded data, and interactivity and inclusion each generated 26% of

the coded data, while intentionality only produced 17% of the coded data within this study. As a result, the element of intentionality was demonstrated by the exemplary presidents participating in this study at a significantly lower rate than the other three elements. As Groysberg and Slind (2012) relay, intentionality is about having a goal in mind for the conversation and that goal is based on bringing purpose, order, and meaning to the organization. Though it was evident that all of the participants practiced conversational leadership behaviors, it was not as evident that they intentionally behaved this way. It is difficult to ascertain if the participants were not being intentional with their conversational behaviors or if they did not recognize how they used conversation in an intentional way. Therefore, this was also an unexpected finding.

Conclusions

This study's key findings provided further insight into the lived experiences of exemplary community college presidents who practice leading their organizations using Groysberg and Slind's (2012) four elements of conversational leadership: intimacy, interactivity, inclusion, and intentionality. As a result, the following eight conclusions were derived from several of these key findings. In addition, these conclusions were chosen based on the highest number of frequencies within an element. For instance, if the theme resulted in 19 frequencies or higher, which was a natural break in the number of frequencies, with 15 being the next closest number of frequencies, then the theme was used as a conclusion for this study.

Conclusion 1

Community college presidents who want to build intimate relationships with their constituents need to share stories to build trust and reveal commonalities.

Though there were six key findings related to the element of intimacy, three conclusions were identified that the researcher found compelling. The first conclusion demonstrated that exemplary community college presidents interviewed for this study consistently use storytelling as a method to bond with constituents and as a way to be relatable to them by revealing commonalities or shared experiences. In fact, during the interviews, the presidents consistently used storytelling as a method to answer the interview questions, so it was both discussed by the participants and utilized by the participants in the presence of the researcher. Therefore, the participants in this study consistently shared lived experiences and demonstrated behaviors focused on their use of storytelling, which aligns with literature. For example, the literature asserts that by getting personal as occurs in storytelling, leaders build trust with others, and trust is the foundation for intimacy (Groysberg & Slind, 2012; Mayfield & Mayfield, 2002; Mazutis & Slawinski, 2007).

Conclusion 1 is supported by the data derived from interviews, observations, and artifacts collected for this study.

- Ninety percent of the exemplary community college presidents interviewed for this study demonstrated that they shared stories with constituents as a way to become more intimate and as a way to be relatable through shared experiences. These presidents regularly use storytelling as way to demonstrate to constituents that they are *human* with issues and lives outside of the work environment. Their "sharing of stories" models this behavior for others in the organization, allowing them to emulate these behaviors by sharing their own stories. This results in deeper bonds developing as intimate knowledge is shared. Presidents also use storytelling as a method to diminish

the institutional hierarchical gaps that occur by becoming more relatable to constituents. When leaders tell stories of similar or shared experiences inside or outside of the organization to constituents, it is a way to remove themselves from the corporate perch and become just another member of the organization. Once members of the institution feel they are similar to their leader, they are more likely to trust the leader and feel safe when interacting.

Conclusion 2

Community college presidents who want to build strong, intimate relationships with their constituents need to commit to being genuine, authentic, and transparent in their conversations.

The participants of this study regularly discussed the necessity of conversing in a genuine, authentic, and transparent way to build organizational intimacy. In fact, these presidents delineated that it is through the authentic and honest conversations with constituents that trust can develop. Groysberg and Slind (2012) concurred, revealing that leaders must be open, direct, and real in their communications with employees. They explained that genuine, authentic, and transparent behaviors are construed as trustworthy, and without trust, there is no intimacy. Maier (2009) contended that a mere conversation will not itself nurture trust, but rather it is the genuineness of the content and interactions within the conversation that will influence a trusting and intimate relationship to develop.

Conclusion 2 is supported by the data derived from interviews, observations, and artifacts collected for this study.

- Ninety percent of the exemplary community college presidents who participated in this study identified that they are genuine, authentic, and transparent when interacting

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with members of their organization. These traits were deemed necessary as a conduit

in building trust. In addition, the participants used these words (genuine, authentic,

and transparent) interchangeably to describe their conversational approach with

constituents and the importance of behaving in the aforementioned ways to develop

trust.

Conclusion 3

Community college presidents who want to increase trust and intimacy within the

organization must actively listen to the members of their organization.

The third conclusion of this study identified that the exemplary community

college presidents interviewed attested to the importance of actively listening to the

members of their organization to build trusting, intimate relationships. Groysberg and

Slind (2012) identified that successful conversational leaders know when to stop talking

and when to start listening to their employees. They concluded that active listening and

attending to others through conversation creates an environment where employees feel

respected and valued by their leader. It is best when these conversations take place in

person and face-to-face so the employee can witness the behaviors that are present when

active listening occurs. Ruben and Gigliotti (2016) stated that leaders need to

demonstrate their attentiveness by nodding, paying attention, and having appropriate

responses during a conversation to demonstrate their investment in the employee. As a

result, the researcher witnessed participant behaviors that demonstrated that they

regularly practiced this strategy. For example, during these interviews, the participants

looked the researcher in the eye, nodded, and responded appropriately to the questions

being asked by the researcher. These behaviors put the researcher at ease during the

interview conversation and served as confirmation that the researcher and the participant had a shared understanding of the material discussed. Furthermore, when the leader is attentive and actively listens to employees, the outcome is often a shared and mutual understanding that the conversational contributions of employees are highly regarded. These shared understandings lead to a trusting and intimate relationship between leaders and employees.

Conclusion 3 is supported by the data derived from the interviews, observations, and artifacts collected for this study.

- Ninety percent of the exemplary community college presidents interviewed in this study identified the necessity of actively listening to members of their organization. These presidents acknowledged active listening as a way to build trust but also as a way to make intelligent and well-informed decisions. The literature supports these sentiments, conveying the importance of practicing active listening with all members of the organization and not just the leaders or executive team members.

Conclusion 4

Community college presidents who want to create an interactive organization must consistently encourage open dialogue across the organization and use their imbedded institutional processes to encourage further collaboration and dialogue among members.

Conclusion 4 conveys the importance that community college presidents placed on their use of specific behaviors that encourage and increase the interactive, bilateral, and multilateral conversations across the organization. In fact, the majority of these presidents noted that it is the responsibility of the president to encourage open dialogue

among all organizational members. For example, several of the participants mentioned

that as a strategy to encourage open dialogue, they often model these behaviors to

demonstrate their support of respectful, bilateral, and multilateral conversations is one

strategy. Another strategy identified by these presidents as a means to encourage open

dialogue was for the president to regularly speak to the importance of interactive campus

dialogue and share how partaking in this would enable the campus community to make

better, well-informed decisions that influence the planning, development, and success of

the organization. This sentiment was mirrored by Groysberg and Slind (2012) as they

relayed that leaders must set the tone for developing interactivity throughout their

organization. The authors demonstrated that organizations thrive when their members are

working together as teammates and colleagues to attain organizational goals and success.

They also stated that if leaders fail to cultivate values and behaviors that support open

dialogue, interactivity will decline as will the successes of the organization.

In addition, the presidents interviewed for this study revealed that they often use

the established institutional processes within their organizations to encourage this

interactive dialogue across campus. For instance, all community colleges have

established shared governance committee structures, multiconstituent meetings, and

organizational planning documents that are institutional mechanisms that promote

interactive dialogue and debate among constituents. The presidents interviewed in this

study felt they had a role in ensuring these institutional processes and mechanisms are

followed so that interactive conversations take place consistently across the organization.

Groysberg and Slind (2012) conveyed that leaders need to support communication

mechanisms that allow for organizational conversations in which diverse representatives

can take part. The authors also encouraged leaders to foster a safe environment that allows organizational members to interactively challenge and debate one another in relation to the planning, development, and decision making of the organization. They also proposed that the president has an obligation in making sure that these processes are practiced and adhered to as a means to cultivate an interactive campus culture.

Conclusion 4 is supported by the data derived from the interviews, observations, and artifacts collected for this study.

- One hundred percent of the exemplary community college presidents participating in this study confirmed that they have a responsibility to encourage open dialogue across the campus. They revealed that when they model behaviors that promote open dialogue, constituents will then emulate those behaviors and an interactive environment will develop.

- Seventy percent of the presidents interviewed in this study recognized the importance of using institutional practices to encourage collaboration and interactive dialogue across the organization. These presidents revealed that shared governance committees, stakeholder meetings, and planning documents are some of the institutional processes already in place that support a rich back-and-forth dialogue among organizational members.

Conclusion 5

It is vital that community college presidents who are concerned with building an inclusive environment design communication processes that promote the importance of receiving regular feedback from constituents and involve them in creating and delivering organizational messages.

Conclusion 5 reveals that there are two important strategies community college presidents often employ to create an inclusive campus culture. One of these strategies is that the president needs to promote feedback from constituents. Several participants shared that *promoting feedback* from constituents is a key component in fostering an inclusive campus culture. Groysberg and Slind (2012) shared that part of being inclusive is providing an avenue for employees to respond to leadership communication by providing their own ideas and not merely accepting the ideas offered by others. Bailey et al. (2015) shared that community college success depends on the engagement of staff and faculty and their willingness to provide feedback on the planning and development of the campus. However, the authors cautioned that constituents' willingness to provide feedback stems from the campus culture and how feedback is either encouraged or discouraged. Furthermore, the literature suggested that the engagement of employees results from leadership's ability to send a message indicating that what constituents say and do matters (Crowley, 2011; Mautz, 2015). Therefore, when presidents encourage the members of the organization to provide their feedback, they are creating an inclusive and engaged workforce.

In addition, the presidents of this study identified that allowing the members of their organization to create and/or deliver organizational messages is a strategy that will increase the likelihood of creating an inclusive campus environment. Furthermore, these presidents also revealed that these organizational messages will not have the necessary buy-in or carry the same perceived value unless there is a collaborative and inclusive approach in how the messages are developed and disseminated. Groysberg and Slind (2012) stated that an inclusive approach to communication transforms employees from

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receivers of corporate messaging into messengers in their own right. Burns (2003) contended that when leaders encourage members of the organization to create and deliver organizational content, it demonstrates they value and trust their skills, talents, and abilities. The presidents of this study also imparted that having messages created and delivered by constituents takes corporate messaging out of the top-down structure that has existed in the past and allows for an inclusive and interactive process to take its place.

Conclusion 5 is supported by the data derived from the interviews, observations, and artifacts collected for this study.

- One hundred percent of the exemplary community college presidents interviewed for this study contended that *promoting feedback* is an instrumental facet in creating an inclusive organizational environment and adds to the credibility in the planning, development, and decision making of the campus. When presidents model behaviors that demonstrate the importance of constituents providing feedback, it becomes an expectation of behaviors to emulate.

- Ninety percent of the participants interviewed for this study described having intentionally inclusive practices that allow the members of the organization to create or deliver organizational messages as a strategy in building well-informed and engaged stakeholders.

Conclusion 6

It is essential for community college presidents who want an inclusive organizational environment to unify organizational members by creating a collective identity.

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Many of the presidents interviewed in this study shared that branding or *creating a collective identity for the organization* is a way to include all members in developing that identity and also create a sense of belonging. As members are unified under this collective identity, an inclusive campus culture emerges. Groysberg and Slind (2012) provided many examples of organizations that have a strong sense of identity and demonstrated how branding can align constituents' purpose to the companies' goals, vision, and mission. Participants insisted that when a collective identity emerges from the organization, stakeholders feel more invested and connected to their colleagues. Furthermore, this sense of belonging and connectedness to colleagues generates greater engagement and productivity from members of the organization.

Conclusion 6 is supported by the data derived from the interviews, observations, and artifacts collected for this study.

- Eighty percent of exemplary community college presidents discussed the benefits of *creating a collective identity for the organization* through branding or campus theme development to increase an inclusive campus environment and promote buy-in and engagement from constituents, which strategically aligns with the mission, vision, and goals of the campus.

Conclusion 7

Community college presidents must be intentional with their use of professional development activities to promote the mission, vision, and goals of the organization in order to provide clarity of purpose for the organization.

Conclusion 7 demonstrates that community college presidents need to intentionally use strategies to provide clarity of purpose for the goals and directives of the

organization. For example, presidents indicated that they use professional development

activities to train, educate, and prepare constituents in understanding and achieving the

mission, vision, and goals of the organization. It was clear from these interviews with

exemplary community college presidents that they felt professional development

activities should be used to educate and train constituents so they are well prepared to

meet the goals of the organization. These presidents mentioned a bevy of professional

development activities, such as campus retreats, inclusive trainings on new initiatives or

campus objectives, gatherings focused on strategic planning, and a host of other activities

that are used to develop employees' understanding and skill sets. These presidents

indicate that intimacy, interactivity, and inclusion are important aspects of conversation,

but if constituents are not informed, educated, or trained to speak credibly to campus

topics, it will serve as a barrier to having robust dialogue that results in decisions that

align with the mission and vision of the college. Therefore, they intentionally provide,

create, endorse, and/or facilitate staff development activities that promote the sharing of

information and training of their organizational members. In addition, many experts

agreed to the importance of having a well-trained and competent workforce for

promoting engagement, job satisfaction, and organizational success (Berson & Stieglitz,

2013; Crowley, 2011; Groysberg & Slind, 2012; Mayfield & Mayfield, 2002).

Conclusion 7 is supported by the data derived from the interviews, observations,

and artifacts collected for this study.

- Seventy percent of presidents interviewed in this study expressed that *using*

  professional development activities to promote the mission, vision, and goals of the

institution is a necessary way to develop, train, educate, and prepare constituents to provide input and to contribute in achieving them.

Conclusion 8

Community college presidents must continually repeat messages related to the goals, vision, and mission of the college to provide clarity of purpose and bring order and meaning to the organization.

Conclusion 8 delineates that presidents demonstrated that it is necessary to continually repeat their messages related to the goals, vision, and mission of the organization so that members are clear in understanding the purpose of the organization and the role they play in realizing that purpose. Repeating these messages is identified by exemplary community college presidents as a necessary strategy in ensuring that constituents understand first what the goals, vision, and mission are and second, their responsibility in achieving them. Experts in the literature contend that leaders need to consistently repeat the strategic vision of the organization and its goals and purpose so each employee has a clear understanding of these organizational goals and the expectations of constituents in achieving these goals (Feltz, 2009; Groysberg & Slind, 2012). Repeating these messages is about providing clarity for organizational members so that everyone is working off the same page, and the president of the college is responsible for providing unified and consistent messages so that stakeholders develop a shared meaning and purpose.

Conclusion 8 is supported by the data derived from the interviews, observations, and artifacts collected for this study.

- Sixty percent of the participants in this study demonstrated that they repeat messages related to the goals, vision, and mission of the organization to provide clarity, focus, and direction to campus activities.

Implications for Action

Though conversational leadership is a relatively new concept, this study revealed that the exemplary community college presidents participating in this study practice conversational leadership behaviors that affect the levels of intimacy, interactivity, and inclusion on their campuses. As a result, there are implications for action that can assist in creating these effective conversational leadership practices. The following are possible actions.

1. Many master's and doctoral programs have leadership programs that infuse current practices and methodologies into the curriculum aimed at creating effective leaders. These programs should adopt coursework on conversational leadership behaviors so that students are exposed to these concepts and understand their value. Furthermore, through this coursework, students could learn how to develop conversational leadership behaviors and practice them in their organizations, leading to a cultural shift of producing conversationally adept leaders.

2. Organizations in higher education should seek leaders who are able to communicate effectively and demonstrate behaviors that will promote organizational success. Since conversational leadership practices have been shown to be a conduit for these goals, an implication for action is to have human resources (HR) departments utilize the elements of conversational leadership to create supplemental questions for

applications and interviews in an attempt to assess potential hires for conversational leadership abilities.

3. The Association of California Community College Administrators (ACCCA) has the goal of developing and supporting community college leaders through "advocacy, professional development, and networking opportunities" (ACCCA, n.d.). Members of ACCCA take part in workshops, conferences, and leadership coursework. As a result, ACCCA should develop workshops and coursework aimed at teaching leaders to use these conversational leadership practices.

4. The Community College League of California (CCLC) is an organization that all community college presidents belong to and assists in their development as leaders of higher education institutions serving thousands of employees and millions of students. The league should have workshops, discussions, and trainings intent on promoting the behaviors present in conversationally adept leaders practicing the four elements of conversational leadership: intimacy, interactivity, inclusion, and intentionality.

5. As a result of this thematic dissertation and 12 peer researchers conducting simultaneous studies related to conversational leadership, new and emerging results can now be added to the body of research. These results should be synthesized in a meta-analysis and used to write a conversational leadership book that would be used to assist emerging leaders in their practice of conversational leadership. This book would also be utilized as a textbook for those educational institutions that adopt coursework on conversational leadership.

6. The American Association of Community Colleges (AACC) has developed six competencies that they deem necessary for an effective community college president.

Though communication was mentioned as one of these competencies, it would be

beneficial for the organization to adopt more detailed criteria relating to

communication and discuss the elements of conversational leadership that demonstrate

effective leadership behaviors leading to organizational success.

7. Thematic dissertation team members should collaborate and develop curriculum

related to conversational leadership that would be used for coursework, organizational

staff development activities, workshops, or other avenues of leadership development.

Recommendations for Further Research

As a result of this study's findings, there are seven recommendations for further

research that could assist in adding to the body of research available and further develop

the concepts associated with conversational leadership and its four elements: intimacy,

interactivity, inclusion, and intentionality.

- Ten exemplary community college presidents were interviewed and data were

  collected from interviews, observations, and artifacts. None of the data was

  disaggregated by gender, age, length of experience, race or ethnicity, which may result

  in additional findings. As a result, it is suggested that further research be conducted

  on exemplary leaders and their use of conversational leadership using their

  demographic information to further disaggregate the data and analyze the results with

  a social and cultural lens. The data for each group can then be compared to one

  another in an attempt to ascertain whether similarities or differences exist in

  conversational leadership practices.

- The 10 exemplary community college presidents interviewed for this study were all

  from single-college community college districts in Southern California. It is

recommended that additional studies consider institutional demographics, such as multicollege districts compared to single-college districts, or urban community colleges, compared to rural community colleges. A research study like this might want to consider gathering data from smaller colleges (serving under 5,000 students) to larger colleges (serving over 30,000 students) to see if leaders practice different conversational leadership behaviors based on these varied institutional demographics.

- Storytelling was identified in this research as a way to increase intimacy between leaders and organizational members. In fact, storytelling was referenced more times than other theme in this study. Since there is not a great deal of information in the literature linking storytelling to intimacy, it is recommended that future research be done on this specific strategy in relation to developing intimate relationships in the workplace.

- All 12 thematic team members conducted research on leaders in organizations that share commonalities. For example, the organizations are nonprofit, service oriented, or academic in nature (elementary and unified school districts, community colleges, migrant education, nonprofit organizations, health services, police agencies, and city management). It is recommended that leaders in for-profit organizations be the focus of a future study.

- This study was qualitative and relied on the conversational leadership experiences as perceived by exemplary leaders. It is recommended that a future research study on conversational leadership use both qualitative and quantitative methods to gather data. For example, leader interviews could still be a facet of the study, but it could also incorporate a questionnaire given to the employees or constituents of exemplary

leaders in an attempt to examine how their conversational leadership skills are perceived by others in the organization. The qualitative and quantitative data could then be compared, synthesized, and analyzed, adding to the body of research available.

- This study examined exemplary community college presidents in Southern California. Future research could look at community college presidents in other geographical locations to determine whether similar results occur. In addition, other studies could investigate university presidents and their use of conversational leadership.

- The element of intimacy yielded the most data from this research study. However, the literature has the least amount of information available in regard to professional intimacy. Therefore, it is recommended that further research be conducted on professional workplace intimacy so there is a greater understanding and awareness on this topic.

Concluding Remarks and Reflections

The topic of conversational leadership was not one that I had originally chosen to use as the subject matter for my dissertation. However, an opportunity presented itself to be part of a thematic dissertation team guided by four faculty experts and in collaboration with 12 peers sharing the same topic but focusing on varied populations. I leapt at the chance and do not regret one moment of the process or how much I have gained from conducting a research study on this worthwhile topic. I have become engrossed in conversational leadership and continually seek new information in hopes of being enlightened and informed as a leader. I will strive to practice intentionality as it pertains to my own conversational leadership behaviors so I can build an intimate, interactive, and inclusive environment in academia.

In fact, intentionality is an area of this study that I found fascinating because the participants did not recognize their own intentional conversational behaviors as much as they identified their conversational behaviors that led to building intimate, interactive, and inclusive relationships. For instance, intentionality comprised 17% of the total data gathered in this study, which is much lower than intimacy at 31%, interactivity at 26% and inclusion at 26%. This shows that though each president used conversational leadership behaviors to lead their organization, not all of them were necessarily intentional with these behaviors, or if they were, they did not recognize that they were being intentional. As a result, it was a very interesting facet of the results and led to my own personal reflection on how I can practice the element of intentionality with my conversational leadership behaviors.

Furthermore, and as another personal reflection resulting from this study, I feel it is imperative that we find ways to reengage a disengaged workforce. I honestly believe that the behaviors of our organizational leaders are key to engaging employees. After conducting this research on conversational leadership, I believe that leaders need to engage their employees through intentional conversations that create intimate bonds, interactive dialogue, and are inclusive with diverse members of the organization. It is through these conversations that the organization evolves and becomes more connected, based on the sharing of knowledge and ideas among its members. I also propose that when leaders use the elements of conversational leadership to provide clarity of organizational purpose for their members, it results in a commitment from the organizational members to engage so they can meet and exceed the goals of the organization.

Finally, I would like to relay, with most certainty, this doctoral program came at the perfect time for me both professionally and personally. The curriculum was well developed and helped me navigate through some tough experiences as a leader and as a person. I truly implemented the leadership strategies and tools that I learned from this transformational leadership program. Moreover, I had the opportunity to develop, change, and evolve my organization through a transformational change project, course curriculum, and from the advice and expertise of those I met and conversed with in this program.

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APPENDICES

APPENDIX A

Conversational Leadership
Interview Questions

Note: The interview is in 4 sections. Each section begins with the definition of a particular element of Conversational Leadership and then proceeds to 3 related interview questions.

Intimacy. The closeness, trust and familiarity created between people through shared experiences, meaningful exchanges, and shared knowledge (Schwarz, 2011; Groysberg & Slind, 2012; Glaser, 2014).

1. How do you create conversations that promote trust between you and the members of your organization?

2. Research indicates that a leader can use personal stories that show vulnerability to build trust and authenticity with members of their organization. Please share with me an example of a time when you disclosed a personal story that showed your vulnerability in an effort to build trust and authenticity with members of your organization.

3. Tell me about a time when you listened attentively to members of your organization to engage them in honest and authentic conversations.

Interactivity. Bilateral or multilateral exchange of comments and ideas; a back-and-forth process (Groysberg & Slind, 2012).

1. How do you engage members of your organization in conversations that are two-way exchanges of ideas and information about your organization?

2. How would you describe the strategies you use to cultivate a culture of open dialogue?

3. Tell me about a time in which you effectively promoted conversation with members of your organization that incorporated an exchange of ideas around a difficult issue or topic.

Inclusion. The commitment to the process of engaging stakeholders to share ideas and participate in the development of the organization (Groysberg & Slind, 2012; Hurley, T. & Brown, J. 2009).

1. What conversational strategies do you find effective to ensure members of the organization remain committed to and included in the organization's goals and or mission?

2. What strategies do you use to encourage all members to become active contributors and spokespersons for the organization?

3. Please share a story about a time when you allowed the members of your organization to generate the content for an important message.

Intentionality. Ensuring clarity of purpose that includes goals and direction to create order and meaning (Barge, 1985; Groysberg & Slind, 2012; Men, 2012).
1. Can you share some examples of when you used conversation to create clarity around your organization's purpose?

2. How do you use conversation to elicit feedback on the goals and direction of your organization?

3. What strategies do you use to give focus and direction to the organizations' communication activities?

APPENDIX B

Conversational Leadership
Interview Questions With Additional Probes

Note: The interview is in 4 sections. Each section begins with the definition of a particular element of Conversational Leadership and then proceeds to 3 related interview questions.

Intimacy. The closeness, trust and familiarity created between people through shared experiences, meaningful exchanges, and shared knowledge (Schwarz, 2011; Groysberg & Slind, 2012; Glaser, 2014).

4. How do you create conversations that promote trust between you and the members of your organization?

Optional probe: As you consider all the teams you work with in your organization, what would you identify as the most important factor in establishing trust with your team members?

5. Research indicates that a leader can use personal stories that show vulnerability to build trust and authenticity with members of their organization. Please share with me an example of a time when you disclosed a personal story that showed your vulnerability in an effort to build trust and authenticity with members of your organization.

Optional probe: Tell me about the outcome from that disclosure

6. Tell me about a time when you listened attentively to members of your organization to engage them in honest and authentic conversations.

Optional probe: Tell me about the impact of that conversation on the members of your organization.

Interactivity. Bilateral or multilateral exchange of comments and ideas; a back-and-forth process (Groysberg & Slind, 2012).

4. How do you engage members of your organization in conversations that are two-way exchanges of ideas and information about your organization?

Optional probe: What tools and institutional supports do you utilize to encourage the process of this back-and-forth conversation?

5. How would you describe the strategies you use to cultivate a culture of open dialogue?

Optional probe: How do you deal with the unpredictable nature of conversation within your organization?

6. Tell me about a time in which you effectively promoted conversation with members of your organization that incorporated an exchange of ideas around a difficult issue or topic.

Optional probe: How do you provide the risk-free space that encourages people to participate in the exchange of ideas?

Inclusion. The commitment to the process of engaging stakeholders to share ideas and participate in the development of the organization (Groysberg & Slind, 2012; Hurley, T. & Brown, J. 2009).

4. What conversational strategies do you find effective to ensure members of the organization remain committed to and included in the organization's goals and or mission?

Optional probe: Why do you feel that these strategies encourage more commitment to organizational goals?

5. What strategies do you use to encourage all members to become active contributors and spokespersons for the organization?

Optional probe: What are the ways that you gauge the impact of members' contributions?

6. Please share a story about a time when you allowed the members of your organization to generate the content for an important message.

Optional probe: How did that work out for you and what was the impact of that?

Intentionality. Ensuring clarity of purpose that includes goals and direction to create order and meaning (Barge, 1985; Groysberg & Slind, 2012; Men, 2012).

4. Can you share some examples of when you used conversation to create clarity around your organization's purpose?

Optional probe: What do you think you did that created that clarity?

5. How do you use conversation to elicit feedback on the goals and direction of your organization?

Optional probe: How have others responded to that?

6. What strategies do you use to give focus and direction to the organizations' communication activities?

Optional probe: Why do you think that the strategies you use help to provide focus?

APPENDIX C

Informed Consent

INFORMATION ABOUT: The behaviors that exemplary leaders practice to lead their organizations through conversation using the four elements of conversational leadership: intimacy, interactivity, inclusion and intentionality.

RESPONSIBLE INVESTIGATOR: Jennifer K. LaBounty, MA

PURPOSE OF STUDY:

You are being asked to participate in a research study conducted by Jennifer K. LaBounty, MA, a doctoral student from the School of Education at Brandman University. The purpose of this phenomenological research study was to describe behaviors that exemplary community college presidents practice to lead their organizations through conversation using Groysberg and Slind's (2012) four elements of conversational leadership: intimacy, interactivity, inclusion and intentionality.

Your participation in this study is voluntary and will include an interview with the identified student investigator. The interview will take approximately 60 minutes to complete and will be scheduled at a time and location of your convenience. The interview questions will pertain to your perceptions and your responses will be confidential. Each participant will have an identifying code and names will not be used in data analysis. The results of this study will be used for scholarly purposes only.

I understand that:

a) The researcher will protect my confidentiality by keeping the identifying codes safe-guarded in a locked file drawer or password protected digital file to which the researcher will have sole access.

b) My participation in this research study is voluntary. I may decide not to participate in the study and I can withdraw at any time. I can also decide not to answer particular questions during the interview if I so choose. Also, the Investigator may stop the study at any time.

c) If I have any questions or concerns about the research, I am free to contact Jennifer K. LaBounty, MA at xxxxx@xxxxxxxxx.xxx or by phone at xxx-xxx-xxxx; or Dr. Patricia White, Dissertation Chair, at xxxxx@xxxxxxxxx.xxx.

d) No information that identifies me will be released without my separate consent and all identifiable information will be protected to the limits allowed by law. If the study design or the use of the data is to be changed, I will be so informed and consent re-obtained. There are minimal risks associated with participating in this research.

e) If I have any questions, comments, or concerns about the study or the informed consent process, I may write or call the Office of the Vice Chancellor of Academic Affairs, Brandman University, at 16355 Laguna Canyon Road, Irvine, CA 92618, (949) 341-7641.

I acknowledge that I have received a copy of this form and the "Research Participant's Bill of Rights." I have read the above and understand it and hereby consent to the procedure(s) set forth.

_____ Date:

Signature of Participant or Responsible Party

_____ Date:

Signature of Principal Investigator

BRANDMAN UNIVERSITY INSTITUTIONAL REVIEW BOARD

Research Participant's Bill of Rights

Any person who is requested to consent to participate as a subject in an experiment, or who is requested to consent on behalf of another, has the following rights:

1. To be told what the study is attempting to discover.
2. To be told what will happen in the study and whether any of the procedures, drugs or devices are different from what would be used in standard practice.
3. To be told about the risks, side effects or discomforts of the things that may happen to him/her.
4. To be told if he/she can expect any benefit from participating and, if so, what the benefits might be.
5. To be told what other choices he/she has and how they may be better or worse than being in the study.
6. To be allowed to ask any questions concerning the study both before agreeing to be involved and during the course of the study.
7. To be told what sort of medical treatment is available if any complications arise.
8. To refuse to participate at all before or after the study is started without any adverse effects.
9. To receive a copy of the signed and dated consent form.
10. To be free of pressures when considering whether he/she wishes to agree to be in the study.

If at any time you have questions regarding a research study, you should ask the researchers to answer them. You also may contact the Brandman University Institutional Review Board, which is concerned with the protection of volunteers in research projects. The Brandman University Institutional Review Board may be contacted either by telephoning the Office of Academic Affairs at (949) 341-9937 or by writing to the Vice Chancellor of Academic Affairs, Brandman University, 16355 Laguna Canyon Road, Irvine, CA, 92618.

APPENDIX E

Field-Test Participant Feedback Questions

While conducting the interview you should take notes of their clarification request or comments about not being clear about the question. After you complete the interview, ask your field-test interviewee the following clarifying questions. **Try not to make it another interview; just have a friendly conversation**. Either script or record their feedback so you can compare with the other two members of your team to develop your feedback report on how to improve the interview questions.
Before the brief post interview discussion, give the interviewee a copy of the interview protocol. If their answers imply that some kind of improvement is necessary, follow up for specificity.

1. How did you feel about the interview? Do you think you had ample opportunities to describe what you do as a leader when working with your team or staff?

2. Did you feel the amount of time for the interview was ok?

3. Were the questions by and large clear or were there places where you were uncertain what was being asked? *If the interview indicates some uncertainty, be sure to find out where in the interview it occurred.*

4. Can you recall any words or terms being asked about during the interview that were confusing?

5. And finally, did I appear comfortable during the interview . . . (I'm pretty new at this)?

Remember, the key is to use common, conversational language and very user-friendly approach. Put that EI to work☺

NOTE: Red font is for your eyes and support info only

APPENDIX F

Interview Feedback Reflection Questions

Conducting interviews is a learned skill set/experience. Gaining valuable insight about your interview skills and affect with the interview will support your data gathering when interviewing the actual participants. As the researcher you should reflect on the questions below after completing the interview. You should also discuss the following reflection questions with your 'observer' after completing the interview field-test. The questions are written from your prospective as the interviewer. However, you can verbalize your thoughts with the observer and they can add valuable insight from their observation.

1. How long did the interview take? Did the time seem to be appropriate?

2. How did you feel during the interview? Comfortable? Nervous?

3. Going into it, did you feel prepared to conduct the interview? Is there something you could have done to be better prepared?

4. What parts of the interview went the most smoothly and why do you think that was the case?

5. What parts of the interview seemed to struggle and why do you think that was the case?

6. If you were to change any part of the interview, what would that part be and how would you change it?

7. What suggestions do you have for improving the overall process?

NIH Certificate of Completion

Certificate of Completion

The National Institutes of Health (NIH) Office of Extramural Research certifies that **Jennifer LaBounty** successfully completed the NIH Web-based training course "Protecting Human Research Participants".

Date of completion: 05/21/2016.

Certification Number: 2079648.