

A CASE STUDY OF PSYCHOLOGICAL EMPOWERMENT
OF EMPLOYEES IN A COMMUNITY COLLEGE

By

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A DISSERTATION PRESENTED TO THE GRADUATE SCHOOL
OF THE UNIVERSITY OF FLORIDA IN PARTIAL FULFILLMENT
OF THE REQUIREMENTS FOR THE DEGREE OF
DOCTOR OF EDUCATION

UNIVERSITY OF FLORIDA

2006

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This document is dedicated to employees of community colleges.

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

I want to thank my husband, Paul, for his steady support for the last two years of research challenges. I also want to thank my son, Dan, for the help with his logic and insight, as well as transcription skills. They made it possible for me to actually do this. Both of them have contributed directly to this work, and I treasure their support. I want to thank my other children, Shawn, Joe, Molly, and Oliver, for their encouragement and support along the way. I am especially grateful for my Dissertation Sanity Kit that brought me into the finish line.

I want to acknowledge the detailed editorial support I have received from my chair, Dr. James L. Doud, and also the willingness to assume the role of my chair when I was ready to give up. I also want to thank Dr. Elizabeth Bondy for pointing me in the right direction with her great knowledge of qualitative research.

My single-minded focus has made me a rather poor friend and coworker in the past couple of years, and I want to thank my friends and coworkers who have not given up on me. Your encouragement has kept me going in spite of my longstanding track record for quitting when the going gets rough.

Finally, to my God and friend, Jesus, I thank him for the light of his wisdom and grace that permeates all things and brings them into alignment with his love and will. I thank him for empowering me to catch glimpses of his truth through this work, and for his forgiveness and grace that has carried me through this season of challenge.

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Abstract of Dissertation Presented to the Graduate School
of the University of Florida in Partial Fulfillment of the
Requirements for the Degree of Doctor of Education

A CASE STUDY OF PSYCHOLOGICAL EMPOWERMENT OF EMPLOYEES
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By

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May 2006

Chair: James L. Doud

Major Department: Educational Administration and Policy

The purpose of this study was to explore the construct of empowerment from the perspective of the psychological experience of employees in a community college preparing for organizational change. A mixed-method case study format was used to investigate the experiences of employees that contributed to beliefs and behavioral expression of empowerment in a post-test/control design. Quantitative investigation of group differences in the psychological construct of empowerment was complemented by qualitative methods to explore in depth the beliefs, experiences, and behaviors that clarify the dynamics of psychological empowerment in the community college work environment. Menon's *Empowerment Scale* was administered to 98 participants of a leadership development program in a community college, along with a matched sample of nonparticipants. From this group a sample of 18 respondents was selected using maximum variation sampling to be interviewed.

Research questions were:

1. Are there differences in the measure of employee empowerment between community college employees who have engaged in a yearlong leadership development program and those who have not?
2. What are the beliefs and experiences that contribute to or explain psychological empowerment for different groups of community college employees?
3. What behaviors are most closely associated with the cognitive state of empowerment in the community college workplace?

Results indicated that participants of the leadership development program had higher goal internalization and lower perceived competence scores than non-participants. Administrators and professionals had higher perceived control scores than did faculty and career service employees. Psychological empowerment is redefined as a reciprocal process involving an individual and the context in which the individual operates, which promotes responsible action, valued expertise, and involvement with higher purpose. Psychological empowerment of employees required a reciprocal organizational capacity to foster the psychological safety of members of the organization. This organizational dynamic included the capacity to promote trust and alignment of employees in an atmosphere of open communication characterized by trust and support. The community college is composed of individual employees who contribute to healthy and vital organizational learning to the extent that they are supported within a psychologically empowering environment.

CHAPTER 1 EMPOWERMENT IN THE COMMUNITY COLLEGE

Changes in the 21st century marketplace are increasing the pressure for organizational change in traditional community colleges (Carnavale & Desrocher, 2001; Guskin & Marcy, 2003). These changes include increased demand for services and spiraling costs combined with diminished public funding, all of which contribute to organizational strain (Carnavale & Desrocher, 2001; Callan, 2003; Evelyn, 2004b; Guskin & Marcy, 2003). Recent concerns voiced by Jack Boggs, president of the American Association of Community Colleges (AACC), indicate that approximately 45% of the leaders of community colleges across the country are projected to be ready for retirement within the next four years (Campbell, 2002; Evelyn, 2004). The community college is under fire to support the current rate of growth and change within the context in which it operates.

The slow-moving hierarchical model of the community college organization stands in sharp contrast to the lithe organizational structures that characterize the 21st century global marketplace (Cohen & Brawer, 1996; Kotter, 1996; Malone, 2004). The tension between conservative processes of tradition and the dynamic processes of change manifests within the organizational structures, systems and culture of the community college. The effect of this kind of tension on employees is to inhibit risk-taking and slow the organizational learning process in response to changing circumstances, which contributes to organizational ineffectiveness (Argyris, 1999; Kotter, 1996). In order to cultivate organizational effectiveness, systematic preparation for change needs to be

undertaken by the current leadership as they prepare to exit the community college. Change can often be perceived as threatening by people who are accustomed to a traditional pattern of work in which change occurs infrequently (Bridges, 1991). To minimize the resistance to change that characterizes traditional static bureaucracy, it will be necessary for leaders to engage community college employees creatively and proactively to embrace the process of transformation. Sharples and Carroll (2002) describe leadership development as a positive means for overcoming the impending leadership crisis facing community colleges.

In order to tip the balance in favor of promoting healthy organizational learning, a combination of structural, systemic and cultural changes must unfold simultaneously. Structural changes would involve movement toward decentralization, as community college campuses branch out to serve constituents in new ways and new locations with proximity to different population centers within a single service delivery area (Kotter, 1996). Systemic changes would involve the broad dissemination of information and access to control for employees and students in order to promote minimal restrictions on responsiveness to constituent needs. Improved internal communication would produce a context that enhances productivity, morale and effective institutional teamwork (Sharples & Carroll, 2002). Cultural changes would involve empowering employees to make effective decisions at the point of service in order to minimize the lag time in response to constituent concerns (Kotter, 1996).

Employee empowerment tends to be severely inhibited in contexts that are bureaucratically structured. However, the community college has a latent democratic, egalitarian tradition that can also lend itself to the development of a resilient, empowered

workforce (Brint & Carabel, 1989; Cohen & Brawer, 1996). According to Sharples and Carroll (2002), leaders are needed at all levels of the community college. The first step to engaging the community college workforce to begin to take risks associated with the decision-making that is necessary for a new, more decentralized model of service delivery would be to create a positive cultural climate conducive to individual growth and empowerment. The research on empowerment tends to construe the phenomenon in two distinct manners. The most common approach to the construct of empowerment examines the external organizational process of delegation of authority to an employee. However, delegation alone does not create a culture of empowerment. Employees who are not accustomed to assuming responsibility may not immediately respond well to increasing ownership for organizational tasks (Argyris, 1999; Bandura, 1997). In fact, delegation may give rise to defensive responses if it is not preceded with adequate psychological preparation (Argyris, 1999; Senge, et al, 1999; Stewart, 2001). An emerging approach to the study of the construct of empowerment explores the individual psychological experience of empowerment as a cognitive state of being. “‘Empowerment’ is not something bestowed through edict. It is gained through development of personal efficacy that enables people to take advantage of opportunities and to remove environmental constraints guarded by those whose interests are served by them” (Bandura, 1997, p. 477). In this view, the individual psychological preparation for taking responsibility for the needs of the organization would be a necessary layer in preparation for full expression of empowerment.

Purpose of Study

The purpose of this study is to explore the construct of empowerment from the point of view of the psychological experience of employees in a community college that

is preparing for organizational change. This study will look at the differences between employees who have participated in a yearlong leadership development program designed to foster individual leadership qualities, and employees who have not participated in leadership development. This study will contribute to the understanding of the social construction of the psychological state of employee empowerment, which is an area of inquiry that has been relatively untouched in community college research. Quantitative investigation of group differences in the psychological construct of empowerment will be augmented by qualitative methods to explore the beliefs and experiences which contribute to the individual endorsement of beliefs regarding the meaning of empowerment in their experience of employment in the community college. Application of qualitative research methods will also explore the behaviors that are most closely associated with the cognitive state of empowerment for community college employees. By deepening the understanding of the social construction of empowerment of employees in the community college, this study will contribute to the ongoing discourse intended to promote healthy change in the turbulent season of the early 21st century in the community college context.

Need For The Study

Change in the community college is inevitable, as the changing of the guard of senior administrators unfolds in the next few years, but the most critical issue facing leaders today is how to make the best use of this period of transition in order to support the process of adaptation to the changing context in which the college operates. The community college is growing through a time of unprecedented change and social turbulence in America (Bennis, Spreitzer, & Cummings, 2001). In order to be positioned to adapt to these dynamic conditions, the community college must foster within its

personnel the capacity for responding effectively to changing circumstances. John Seeley Brown (2002) refers to the demand characteristics of the current organizational climate as a creative tension that is both radical and grounded. “Radical” refers to the sense that dramatically new organizational structures will need to emerge along with new patterns of behavior of individuals within the organization, and yet going to the root of being “grounded” in the core values that provide a sense of meaning for members of the institution.

Particularly in bureaucratic organizations, where trust may be heavily invested in the efficient functioning of organizational systems of policy and procedure rather than individual employee performance, the experience of change may be perceived as extremely threatening when it involves assuming responsibility for responding to variable conditions on the front lines (Stewart, 2001). In order to begin to foster a willingness to consider the kind of significant structural change that is likely to occur in the coming decades, whether or not the community college is ready, the work must begin by cultivating a psychologically healthy climate in which members of the college community acquire the knowledge and skills necessary to begin to take responsibility for autonomous decision-making. According to Cohen and Brawer (1996), “The issue of participation is important in an era when empowerment and involvement of all staff members has become a guiding principle of administration” (p.110). The tension inherent in this kind of systemic staff development is that the tendency would be to replicate the patterns and processes that are known and familiar, rather than to prepare employees for a radically new way of doing business. But as Warren Bennis (2001) suggested, “The

future has no shelf life” (p. 3); the skills that have worked in the past will not continue to work in the days to come.

In order to engage the college community in proactive change, the process of organizational learning must begin with fostering institutional responsiveness to the context in which it is situated. In 2000, Alex and Helen Astin strongly recommended that institutions of higher education begin to replace hierarchical systems with collegial, collaborative ones, while systematically encouraging the development of leadership among all members of the college community. According to Sharples and Carroll (2002), “Development and training of leaders is a fundamental function of a learning organization” (p. 44). Three distinct aspects of organizational design would be involved in promoting a coherent plan for organizational learning; there is a delicate balance that is needed to be sure that all three emerge in harmony with each other. Organizational growth hinges on the anatomy of organizational structure, the physiology of organizational systems, and the spirit of organizational culture (Kotter, 1996).

The groundwork for changes in the anatomy of the community college has already been underway for decades as campuses decentralize to serve students close to where they live in branch campuses, and also through a variety of “distance learning” initiatives such as online instruction and video courses. However, in most instances, the centralization of authority and decision-making in central administrative offices is still largely the norm, which tends to hinder responsiveness to students who participate in outlying venues (Cohen & Brawer, 1996). In order to promote institutional effectiveness in a decentralized organizational structure, personnel who operate in these environments, where changing environmental demands bring in an endless stream of individual

variations, need to be empowered with the latitude to take risks and respond effectively to local issues without fear of recrimination from risk-averse leaders in central administration. This type of structural change is likely to unfold when the failure to do so becomes more costly than the cost associated with taking the risks (Brown, 2002). The first step in this process, then, would involve a broad base of staff development so that there is a greater investment of trust in personnel by administrators, and personnel are also equipped with the information, confidence and competence to be able to make effective decisions aligned with organizational priorities (Malone, 2004; Menon, 2001; Stewart, 2001).

The features required for the physiological changes in the systems of the community college are largely in place, as communication technology provides the potential for broad dissemination of access to information for all faculty and staff almost instantaneously through email and web postings. However, internal communication lags behind in reality as the result of the organizational structure in which administrative leaders within the bureaucracy retain the right to control and limit the flow of information, and intentionally restrict access to control in order to minimize exceptions to rules and regulations which form the basis of much institutional decision-making in response to constituent needs. This administrative control also increases the lag time for individual response to exceptions, which tends to clog the system with massive numbers of individual needs flowing up through the chain of command in which the decision-making authority is invested (Argyris, 1999; Stewart, 2001; Malone, 2004). Competitors in the local educational market offer direct, streamlined services that eliminate this slow-moving response to legitimate student concerns, and legislative support is aligned with

the more efficient proprietary providers. Students are more likely to embrace the higher costs associated with proprietary educational opportunity in order to gain the value-added dimension of increased responsiveness to their needs. As the bottom-line is negatively impacted, a persuasive argument is set in motion to encourage greater decentralization of information and its control. Locally, administrators are beginning to notice, with some surprise, that students are willing to pay as much as five times the cost of community college tuition when they perceive the assurance of quality education that is expedient and responsive to them as individuals.

The biggest challenge in this entire process of transforming the community college to become a responsive learning organization is taking the first step of changing the psychological orientation of the personnel within the current organizational culture. Bureaucratic environments tend to both erode self-efficacy of employees and organizational trust by inhibiting a capacity for voice to directly address problems as they occur (Argyris, 1999; Stewart, 2001). In order for the community college in the 21st century to become effective, people who exercise control at the top need to become willing to relinquish decision-making power, to empower employees to construct honest solutions for the problems that hinder effectiveness (Argyris, 1999; Kotter, 1996). Dense communication networks, where trust is fostered, need to be developed to encourage employees to reflect on the deeper motivations behind the simple facts of situations, so that even dangerous information can be surfaced in order to produce real learning and change (Argyris, 1999; Roueche, Johnson, Roueche, & Associates, 1997).

Theoretical Framework

In order to root this study in the research that has preceded it, the lens of social construction will be used to provide a basic orientation to the data as it emerges.

Organizational learning is essentially a social activity, and must be understood as it emerges from the specific context in which learning takes place (Bandura, 1997; Gergen & Gergen, 2003; Garvin, 1993; Carr-Stewart & Walker, 2003). According to Starrat (2001), leaders in a democratic learning environment must continually engage in the cycle of constructing, deconstructing and reconstructing knowledge in order to address the continually changing reality in which we operate. They need to draw on the rich resource of the distributed intelligence of all members of the organization through active participatory processes. By drawing on the assumptions of social construction, the experiences that contribute to the beliefs of participants regarding the construct of empowerment will be explored for the varied perspectives of the meaning that they have derived from their social interactions in that institution.

Statement of the Problem

The purpose of this study is to explore the construct of empowerment from the point of view of the psychological experience of employees in a community college preparing for organizational change. The study will explore the attributes of the psychological construct of empowerment as an emergent function of a leadership development initiative in a community college preparing for a change in formal leadership. It will contribute to the understanding of the intentional social construction of the psychological state of employee empowerment, which is an area of inquiry that has been untouched in community college research. The setting of this research is in a mid-sized community college located in an urban area.

The Leadership Cultivation Program (LCP) in this institution was designed to intentionally foster individual leadership qualities in employees at all levels within the organization by casting a wide net to solicit a broad base of participation (Sharples &

Carroll, 2002). Participation in the LCP project was entirely voluntary. This program consisted of a yearlong sequence of events sponsored by the President and orchestrated by the Vice-President for Institutional Planning, which included a combination of didactic and interactive group activities, individual and group institutional projects, formal mentoring, and institutional sponsorship relationships. The expressed intention for cultivating this institution-wide leadership development program was that “by teaching best practices to solve organizational problems, it is possible to change the actions, thoughts, and feelings of a large segment of members of the organization and thus change institutional culture” (p. 36). With the expressed emphasis of the LCP on developing the qualities of leadership for the purpose of succession planning, graduates of the LCP program would be expected to express higher levels of the cognitive state of employee empowerment than non-participant employees. In the first phase of this study the following question addressed the differences in the measure of empowerment between community college employees who engaged in the LCP program and those who did not.

Research question #1: Are there differences in the measure of employee empowerment between community college employees who have engaged in leadership development and those who have not?

In the second phase, qualitative data were collected, primarily through in-depth interviews with a few individuals from each of four employee categories: career service, professional, faculty, and administrator. Interview data regarding beliefs and experiences that contribute to the Empowerment Scale scores provided information regarding the specific nature of the factors that contribute to the cognitive state of empowerment. Data will be analyzed in depth using Hatch’s typology methodology to explore the beliefs and

experiences that contribute to the psychological experience of the construct of empowerment for both groups.

Research question #2: What are the experiences and beliefs that contribute to or explain psychological empowerment for different groups of community college employees?

In addition, during the qualitative phase this study also explored the behaviors most closely associated with the psychological experience of empowerment. Interview data permitted participants to clarify the factors associated with the behavioral manifestation of the cognitive state of empowerment in the workplace.

Research question #3: What behaviors are most closely associated with the cognitive state of empowerment in the workplace?

By deepening the understanding of the social construction of empowerment of employees in the community college, this study contributed to the ongoing discourse intended to promote healthy change in the turbulent environment in today's community college context. People learn all the time (Lazarus, 1991; Livingstone, 1999). This study explored the specific ways in which intentional cultivation of individual learning in this community college feed into organizational learning (Astin & Astin, 2000; Brown, 2002; Senge, 1990; Starrat, 2001) As the individual experiences of members of the college community were analyzed and synthesized into meaningful patterns reflecting the interactions within the larger system, the dynamics of organizational practice that contributed to the psychological empowerment of employees became clearer.

Definitions of Terms

For the purpose of this study, the following terms are defined:

Empowerment is an active orientation toward obstacles or challenges through which one operates from an internal sense of control and competence, energized by personal alignment with larger organizational goals that are meaningful.

Experiences involve the events, interactions or reactions, either vicarious or actual, that the individual employee recalls regarding their work life within the institution.

Beliefs are the cognitive interpretations of experiences that the employee declares about the past, present or future regarding any aspect of employment.

Behaviors are self-report descriptions of actions that the employee enacts, either independently or in connection with others in the work environment, which may or may not be corroborated through actual observation.

Psychological empowerment is a cognitive state characterized by perceived control, perceived competence, and, goal internalization (Menon, 2001).

Perceived control is the private perception of self-determination in an individual's work role, in which the person is able to influence the outcomes of her or his action in a way that is personally desirable (Bandura, 1997; Menon, 2001).

Perceived competence is the internal self-appraisal that an individual is able to do the tasks or gain the abilities needed, toward which they are motivated by means of effort (Bandura, 1997; Spieker & Hinsz, 2004).

Goal internalization is the individual alignment of personal goals with the larger organizational goals that fosters the commitment of energy toward goals that are personally meaningful (Thomas & Velthouse, 1990).

Organizational learning is the capacity of an organization to adapt to the changing external environment by organizational coherence and mobilization of the

individual knowledge and skills of its members, in which the learning capacities of all members are incorporated meaningfully into the behavior of the whole.

Leadership is an active capacity of an individual to engage organizational energy to influence the organizational capacity to adapt to changing environmental contingencies (Astin & Astin, 2001).

Significance of the Study

As community colleges oscillate among strategies to cope with serious organizational strain, the study provided an opportunity to gain insight into the individual experiences that contribute to the beliefs and accompanying behaviors that emerge as employees at different levels of an institution prepare for significant leadership organizational change. The study explored key attributes of the psychological construct of empowerment as an emergent function of a sustained leadership development initiative in a community college preparing for a change in formal leadership. Throughout the current discourse on the community college and change, theoretical understanding, combined with expert opinions, abound regarding the transformation of the community college as an entity at a crossroads. What is clear is that the time for radical change is at hand, but the specific tools for reconstructing the community college remain to be developed. Such tools will need to be grounded in the core values of what makes the community college in America a great institution (Brown, 2002; Jamilah, 2004a; Jamilah, 2004b; Boggs, 2002). By applying the theoretical construct of empowerment by means of an empirical study of a community college workforce preparing for a radical change initiative, this study offers a window into the psychological work life of community college employees, who shape the life of the larger organization. Findings from this study may be applied in four distinct ways.

First, the most direct application of this research will be to validate the macro and micro levels of change produced by the efforts of the current leadership in this particular institution. This study will offer insight into the current system as it prepares for change, highlighting the beneficial characteristics of the leadership development initiative as it contributes to the psychological empowerment of employees. By drawing on the bottom-up intelligence that is distributed among the members within various levels of the institution, useful patterns emerged in the beliefs of participants. These patterns clarify the specific elements of organizational life that contribute to an individual employee's experience of empowerment.

Second, leaders at all levels within other community college institutions, including those charged with administrative oversight, are able to extract the nuts and bolts of meaning to understand how the empowerment of employees contributes to organizational learning and effectiveness (Sharpley & Carroll, 2002; Garvin, 1993; and Frankl, 1959). This study provides an open window into a layer of culture that can be developed to facilitate healthy institutional learning and growth.

Third, community college employees in diverse institutions are able to see in this study a reflection of many of the tensions that may be common among personnel in the current environment. By such identification, this research validates the difficulties of employees in the middle of a season of transition, and points the way to some useful strategies for resolving the psychological tension associated with institutional strain.

Fourth, this study aimed to increase clarity for the concept of psychological empowerment in support of the ongoing research discourse of organizational learning in the community college. By means of the empirical data, beliefs and behaviors associated

with empowerment are clarified, preparing the way for further research in this important area of organizational development.

Limitations of the Study

The essential limitation of this study, a mixed methods case study of a single institution, is the inability to generalize findings from a single case. However, in order to permit in-depth study of the phenomenon of psychological empowerment in the context of the community college, this limit is appropriate.

Assumptions

To explore the topic of empowerment, the following assumptions are embedded in this project:

1. The Leadership Cultivation Program (LCP) provided an opportunity for the participants to cultivate the psychological attribute of empowerment.
2. Psychological empowerment is an attribute of leadership.
3. A third assumption is that the employees of the community college who took the Empowerment Scale survey reported their true perceptions.

Summary

The purpose of the study was to explore both quantitatively and qualitatively the psychological construct of empowerment among employees of a community college preparing for a change in leadership. The study utilized a mixed-method case study format to investigate in depth the experiences of employees that contribute to the beliefs and the behavioral expression of empowerment in a post-test/control design. The participants involved had completed a yearlong leadership development program in a community college.

This study contributes to the body of knowledge regarding employee empowerment for the organization of the community college. As a unique organization approaching a

turbulent period of change, empirical research is needed to guide practice that facilitates organizational learning and successful adaptation of the community college.

What follows in Chapter 2 is a review of the literature to situate this research in the appropriate context of research and organizational practice. Chapter 3 describes the research methodology used in carrying out this mixed-methods study. Chapter 4 describes quantitative data collection and analysis of results. Chapter 5 describes the qualitative data and analysis. Finally, Chapter 6 integrates quantitative and qualitative results and concludes with a discussion of the implications of the study, with recommendations for future directions.

CHAPTER 2 OVERVIEW OF EMPOWERMENT

Empowerment has been a subject of a great deal of research since the mid-seventies when the term first emerged (Perkins, 1995). However, in spite of the extensive volume of work, there has been little conceptual clarity with regard to a precise definition of the term. In many ways, the understanding of empowerment provided by each of the researchers and theorists appears to be somewhat akin to the story of the blind men and the elephant. Each one describes with great detail and precision exactly what it is that they perceive, and each one is correct in their interpretation of their perceptions, yet each one grasps only a piece of the understanding needed to understand the whole. This lack of conceptual clarity has not hindered the implementation of a plethora of empowerment initiatives in the workplace, as the concept is intuitively appealing for enhancing organizational effectiveness. But the lack of conceptual clarity has hindered the success of these attempted empowerment initiatives. Albert Bandura (1997) addressed this issue in this way: “There is much talk of ‘empowerment’ as the vehicle for bettering lives. This is a badly misused construct that has become heavily infused with promotional hype, naïve grandiosity, and virtually every brand of political rhetoric” (p. 477). Perkins (1995) noted that some form of the word empowerment was used by the White House in official statements 360 times between 1992 and 1994, by legislators 3,769 times in the Congressional Record between 1985 and 1994, and over 7,000 times in proposed state legislation between 1991 and 1994. Clearly this term has come into common use, even if the meaning was subject to various interpretations.

Following World War II, the community college system in America mushroomed in size (Brint & Karabel, 1989; Cohen & Brawer, 1996). During this period of rapid growth, large numbers of institutions emerged in response to the demand for higher education. As the systems have evolved in response to the tremendous growth in student numbers, the pattern of the traditional bureaucracy has been the organizational structure common to public community colleges. Centralized control of decision-making authority was the norm at the beginning of the boom in community college growth. Hayden (1986) reports that growth of this kind, in organizational size and complexity, necessitates the differentiation and elaboration of complex specialized organizational structures in which social positions become more hierarchically organized and unequally available. However, the result of the unequal distribution of social rank, and the accompanying power and control over organizational resources, is an increase of competition and conflict for higher socioeconomic status and resources within the organization. Over time, institutions organized in this way tend to become ineffective as the internal conflicts hinder organizational effectiveness.

Many of those institutions are undergoing significant organizational challenges as our larger culture undergoes a period of radical change. Technology is radically restructuring the way we organize and communicate, yet the community college has been largely insulated from the challenge to change. This is due to its function as a post-secondary educational arm of the state government. Many of the leaders who began in the hey-day of the post-World War II boom are preparing to retire (Campbell, 2002; Evelyn, 2004b). State allocations have been declining and the proportion of cost allocated to students has been rising, which tends to compromise the fundamental mission of the open

door. Still, with rising costs, the demand for services is steadily increasing. Additionally, projections indicate that the largest enrollment growths are yet to come (Callan, 2003). In earlier times, due to the high cost of communication, centralized control of decision-making made sense in terms of organizational efficiency and effectiveness (Malone, 2004). However, as the cost of communication has come down, and organizations have extended their reach, the centralized control of decision-making has had a tendency to hinder organizational effectiveness in response to constituent needs. An alternative strategy for enhancing organizational effectiveness is to consider the functioning of the community college as a dynamic system in which the power of information is distributed as feedback throughout the system in response to environmental demands (Malone, 2004; Senge, 1990).

In much of the literature on organizational learning, the trend is for decision-making authority to be transferred downward in the organizational hierarchy, along with the power to effect necessary adjustment in response to constituent needs (Argyris, 1999; Bandura, 1995, Bandura 1997; Brown, 2002; Malone, 2004). As this happens, the institution is able to learn and adapt to the rapidly changing environmental contingencies. However, organizational learning involves several processes. First, those who now control the flow of organizational information and resources must be willing to transfer these resources downward in the organization and give up a portion of their power and control. Second, as the employees at the lower tier of organizational life are equipped with the resources needed to make effective decisions, they need to be psychologically empowered to act (Thomas & Velthouse, 1990; Perkins, 1995; Rappaport, 1995; Spreitzer, 1995; Foster-Fishman & Keys, 1997; Menon, 2001). In authoritarian cultures,

where employees have been socialized to dependent roles which minimize risk-taking, leaders who choose to give increased power to subordinates through empowerment initiatives can expect to be relatively unsuccessful if the preliminary work of psychological empowerment of employees does not take place first (Perkins, 1995; Foster-Fishman & Keys, 1997; Menon, 2001). The literature reviewed for this study will examine the elements that contribute to our current understanding of psychological empowerment of employees in organizations, and the unique organization of the community college in particular.

Theoretical Orientation

This construct of empowerment has been elaborately researched from an incredibly diverse range of social, theoretical and ideological perspectives ranging from individual psychological perspective through corporate/organizational perspectives to social psychological/ community-based systems perspectives. Data from various projects has included quantitative, qualitative, mixed-methods, practical action research, and several non-empirical, purely theoretical works that contribute to the corpus of empowerment literature. The intent of this particular study was to transfer the weight of this research into the context of the community college, and -- by means of multiple methods of investigation -- to contribute to the clarification of the meaning of empowerment and the processes that are associated with the psychological aspect of employee empowerment in this context. Empowerment is a construct that is conceptually complex, with multiple definitions and multiple layers of meaning that all have a common theme (Perkins, 1995; Rappaport, 1995; Potterfield, 1999; Menon, 2001). A core element that cuts across the majority of the literature is the focus on the cultivation of strengths at various levels within a social system (Rappaport, 1995).

Although there are many possible definitions that could be utilized, for the purposes of this study the definition that provided the seed was taken from the work of Sanjay Menon (2001). Menon's research developed and validated an objective instrument to measure the psychological construct of empowerment. The definition upon which he built his self-report rating scale was "The psychologically empowered state is a cognitive state characterized by a sense of perceived control, competence, and goal internalization" (p. 161). As a purely positivist piece of research, Menon sought to develop a reliable and valid means to assess the quantity of psychological empowerment that might be present in a particular organization at a particular point in time. By aggregating the individual scores across departments or divisions or institutions as a whole, the state of psychological empowerment of employees within the unit of analysis may be captured accurately and parsimoniously. However, an individual's judgments regarding his or her sense of perceived control or competence or goal internalization are shaped by beliefs and experiences that go beyond a simple reporting of scores at a moment of time. The purely positivist approach raises many questions that it cannot adequately answer due to the socially constructed nature of empowerment (Rappaport, 1995; Foster-Fishman & Keys, 1997).

In order to be clear about the specific elements of social construction theory that figure into this study, a few basic assumptions of social construction need to be made explicit. First, the world of social reality is not completely knowable through objective observation that is unbiased (Carr-Stewart & Walker, 2003; Gergen & Gergen, 2003). Even in the most rigorous, scientific research, there are subtle subjective distortions that flow from an individual's training and experience in the form of mental models or

paradigms that form the basis of interpreting the world in which one lives (Kuhn, 1996; Senge, 1990). Such is the power of these mental schemata that people who hold differing paradigms can actually see different things when looking at the same thing from the same point of view (Kuhn, 1996). Abstracted data can provide a source of information that may be interpreted, but it is important to be aware of the assumptions embedded in our method of interpretation. Whether the interpretation belongs to the researcher analyzing data or the participant selecting a score to endorse on a self-report survey, interpretive cognitions emerge from an individual's subjective processes that go beyond simple facts to the framework of meaning of the individual (Thomas & Velthouse, 1990).

According to the theory of social construction, the ways in which we come to understand the world emerge over time through socialization into the patterns of thought that operate as unquestioned assumptions about reality (Starratt, 2001; Carr-Stewart & Walker, 2003; Freeman & Datillio, 1992). The “soft structures of individual beliefs, motives, goals, and paradigms” (Senge, Kleiner, Roberts, Ross, Roth, & Smith, 1999, p. 405) aggregated across the total organization form the core of institutional common life. Individual beliefs put forth an “invisible force operating below the threshold of awareness as unconscious assumptions about reality that are unquestioned” (Potterfield, 1999, p. 116). These complex patterns of thoughts influence how experiences will be perceived and understood as a transformational process that shapes new information as it comes in to fit and reinforce preconceived understandings (Freeman & Datillio, 1992). These interpretive processes affect the way people experience events (Thomas & Velthouse, 1990; Cooperrider & Sekerka, 2003). While there are many different ways of interpreting the world, events become meaningful as people share information and stories through the

use of common language which leads to the creation of new knowledge (Carr-Stewart & Walker, 2003; Rappaport, 1995). By applying the filter of social construction to this study of the psychological processes of employee empowerment in the community college, a richer understanding of the dynamics of empowerment will become clearer as the data is aggregated by means of quantitative methodology and corroborated by means of qualitative inquiry.

Part of the conceptual difficulty with the construct of employee empowerment is that it involves both the psychological perspective of the individual as well as the organizational processes in relation to the individual (Rappaport, 1995; Perkins, 1995; Potterfield, 1999; Menon, 2001). George Boggs, president of the American Association of Community Colleges, described the situation in a recent interview: “We’re facing some monumental challenges right now, there’s no doubt about that. One could say we are at a crossroads. The ways in which we confront some of these challenges may certainly define our institutions for years to come” (Evelyn, 2004b). As the institution of the community college undergoes a period of radical growth and transformation, how it will emerge depends on how effectively its members can be mobilized to learn and respond to the changes it encounters. As emerging technologies continually revise patterns of work and dynamics of organizational power relationships, the meaning of these changes are open to negotiation (Crotty, 1998; Malone, 2004; Brown, 2002; Johnson, 2001).

Key Perspectives on the Topic of Employee Empowerment

Theoretical Works

Kenneth Thomas and Betty Velthouse (1990) developed a model of psychological empowerment which has served as the basis for many empirical studies. They addressed

the proliferation of publications regarding empowerment that emerged following the initial use of the term in the social sciences in 1976. The chief problem that they sought to address was lack of construct clarity. It seems that the term empowerment was used for many contradictory purposes, and what it really meant was up to the agenda of the author. Drawing on their expertise in management, and utilizing a “soft constructionist perspective,” (p. 669) they articulated a complex model of psychological empowerment that defined empowerment, and the dimensions of worker experience that form the basis of empowerment. They went on to also describe the process of abstraction from specific work situations to global patterns of worker behavior, and the cognitive processes that are assumed to mediate this abstraction.

Empowerment was defined as changes in specific cognitive variables (task assessments), which determine employee motivation – simply referred to as “intrinsic task motivation” (Thomas & Velthouse, 1990, p. 667). The four cognitive variables delineated in this work included sense of impact, competence, meaningfulness, and choice. In this argument, *impact* is perceived to be “the degree to which behavior is seen as ‘making a difference’ in terms of accomplishing the purpose of the task” (p.672). This also involves having knowledge of the results. *Competence*, is defined as “the employee’s sense of self-efficacy or personal mastery” (p. 672). The behavioral correlates of competence would be initiation and enhanced resilience in the face of difficulties. The term *meaningfulness* refers to the alignment of an individual’s “ideals or values with the value of the work” (p. 672). The essential characteristic of meaningfulness is that a person cares about what they do. Choice involves the individual sense of self-determination, wherein the worker is the “locus of causality” (p. 673) as the originator of

their behavior rather than a pawn, which is the prime condition necessary for intrinsic motivation.

Thomas and Velthouse (1990) further delineated the difference between simple task assessments related to a job at hand, and the global characteristics of these same cognitions repeated and practiced over time as stable patterns of accumulated learning. These beliefs are characterized as a “potential reservoir of faith” which is used to interpret novel or ambiguous situations, and reflect the same four characteristics as pervasive patterns of responding over time and varied tasks. *Global impact* is associated with locus of control, which has been studied as a personality variable, and has also been shown to be modifiable over time. *Global competence* is reflected in self-confidence. *Global meaningfulness* has to do with the psychological investment of caring and commitment. *Global choice* has to do with the autonomy of an individual as the originator of the choice behavior. These pervasive patterns of intrinsic empowerment motivation align with the cognition research on automaticity in which thought patterns repeated habitually over time become automated beliefs that operate as unquestioned assumptions.

Interpretive styles are the individual processes of mediating events in which the individual is actively involved in constructing their own sense of empowerment. In this model, Thomas and Velthouse (1990) identified three factors involved in interpreting events: attributing, evaluating, and envisioning. *Attribution* style has to do with the locus of causality for successes and failures. Here, empowerment reflects an attributional style toward success that tends to be more stable and global, and toward failure that tends to be more transient and external. Taken from the work of Albert Ellis (as cited in Thomas &

Velthouse, 1990), *evaluation* has to do with standards for judging one's efforts.

Evaluation may be balanced and rational, or it may contain dysfunctional judgments that set unrealistic standards for perfection, or it may create a sense of dissatisfaction due to negative beliefs about one's work. *Envisioning* refers to a cognitive process of anticipating the outcomes of one's efforts. This mediating process serves as a filter through which outcomes are valenced with either positive or negative anticipation. The valence of anticipation affects immediate task efforts.

The core purpose of this theoretical work was to lay a social construction foundation for the cognition of empowerment, in which employees are active co-creators of the reality in the workplace. With this in mind, Thomas and Velthouse (1990) proposed that empowerment was a construct that could be deliberately cultivated in the work environment by means of interventions that involve workers such as leadership, delegation, job design, and rewards.

Perkins (1995) provided a very detailed background to the diverse and voluminous streams of thought regarding the concept of empowerment. His research identified the first mention of the term in a social work study in the African-American community in 1976. Specific to the domain of programs that promote psychological empowerment, he described them as the ones that "use the language of empowerment and encourage, or claim to encourage, individual and community control over the planning and implementation of solutions to individually and locally felt problems, typically by decentralizing decision-making authority" (p. 767). Perkins indicated that most of the applied or policy literature on empowerment use the term in reference to a variety of different things without defining it. In organizations, empowerment is often associated

with the tension to increase participation of group members, by developing latent leadership within the system, without eliciting burnout and frustration that can commonly accompany active participation in an organization. There is also an ongoing tension between the individual identity and interests and the organizational identity and interests, as well as the tension between the traditions of stability and the movement toward change that is often associated with empowerment.

In summary of objective studies that have attempted to measure the outcome of empowerment, Perkins (1995) defined empowerment as the equitable sharing of power. He indicated that in order to adequately assess the social and psychological issues of empowerment in an organization that was undergoing significant change, both quantitative and qualitative research methods would be needed. Research is especially needed to address some of the paradoxical tensions with empowerment that often sabotage the effectiveness of initiatives.

Perkins (1995), suggests the critical first step in empowerment initiatives involves individual consciousness-raising in which the individual's world-view is challenged so that s/he recognizes her/his relative lack of power within a particular context. Once this consciousness raising has taken place, the unintended consequence that may occur is a tendency for competition among various sub-groups to begin to emerge. Perkins recommends that empowerment cannot be simply an individual process. People will need to learn how to deal with working as group members, collaborating effectively in coalitions within the larger organization, to resolve inequities of power distribution. This can unfold both in the context of organizational development as well as in initiatives that emphasize "participatory workplace democracy" (p. 778).

At the center of much of the difficulty associated with the workplace is the organizational structure of the 19th century bureaucracy governed by principles described by Perkins (1995) as “antithetical to empowerment” (p. 778). A key challenge in empowerment initiatives in bureaucratic settings is the tendency for the context to preserve the status quo by maintaining existing inequalities. Perkins encourages a collaborative research process for the study of empowerment, so that the knowledge gained from the research could become part of the fiber of change within organizations. He recommends particularly that psychological researchers on empowerment “speak truth to power” (p. 795) by sharing the fruit of their study with leaders and members of the group that provide data in order to apply knowledge in the setting where it will be maximally useful.

The challenge of this kind of organizational feedback is that the researcher may be affected by the same issues of bureaucratic functioning as group members. Alternatively, if the researcher is actually a member of the group, while they will benefit from their work by receiving greater weight from group members rather than outsiders, they will need to work diligently to avoid being immersed in the paradigm of organizational life that is prevalent within the organization. The outcomes of research may not be what organizational administrators want to hear, yet it is precisely the gap between research and application that needs to be filled. Empowerment researchers may not always appreciate that political concerns may take priority in organizational decision-making over scientific truth. The gap between two distinct and often mistrustful groups, administrators and researchers, must be bridged by staff members who will be able to do

the work of translating theory to practice in order for effective application of research to take place.

Rappaport (1995) provides a persuasive case for the use of narrative in empowerment research as a tool for constructing meaning and giving voice to all members of a community. By means of the narrative psychology approach, stories are shared as a tool for influencing social identity and promoting individual and social change. Stories have a powerful affect on human behavior. Rappaport suggests that it is very difficult to sustain any kind of change toward empowerment without also evoking the changing stories of participants regarding personal experiences, opportunities, and roles that form the basis of the empowerment transformation. One of the challenges of traditional research methodology is that sometimes the views of participants are unexpressed due to a lack of a public forum in which to express them. It is a valuable aspect of research to permit these quieter voices to be amplified for the purpose of better understanding the organizational processes at work in empowerment research. Rappaport calls for collaboration among diverse disciplines in the social sciences, drawing on research that is quantitative and experimental as well as qualitative and naturalistic in describing the varied manifestations of the construct of empowerment.

Rappaport (1995) defines empowerment in broad terms as “an intentional, ongoing process centered in the local community, involving mutual respect, critical reflection, caring and group participation, through which people lacking an equal share of valued resources gain greater access to and control over those resources”(Cornell University Empowerment Group as cited in Rappaport, p. 597). And true to his preference for narrative, he identifies the power to tell one’s story and have influence over the story of

one's group as a powerful resource. This story is further defined as an "individual's cognitive representation or social communication of events that are unique to that person organized temporally or thematically" (p. 803). Narratives, by contrast are collective stories that are common to a group of people. The idea proposed by Rappaport is that most people involved in a community adopt the narrative of the group. In times of change and high stress, these stories are called into question and revised and a new community narrative is formed as a resource of support for the community. "If narratives are understood as resources, we are able to see that who controls that resource, that is who gives stories social value, is at the heart of the tension between freedom and social control, oppression and liberation, and empowerment versus disenfranchisement" (p. 803). As with most other valuable resources, Rappaport proposes that this is a resource that is unevenly distributed by those who control other valued resources, and is a key component of cultivating an empowering organization. He introduces two elements that are core to the notion of empowerment in an organization. The first is agency, which involves the ability to control something both individually and collectively. The second is communion, which involves a high degree of corporate cohesion through communication and mutual alignment with integrated goal orientation. In this view both elements, the power to control and common goal orientation, are critical to organizational empowerment.

Quantitative Works

Building on the work of Thomas and Velthouse (1990), Gretchen Spreitzer developed and validated an assessment instrument for psychological empowerment as part of her doctoral dissertation in 1992. She published several articles between 1992 and 1999 using the same data with varying research questions yielding different statistically

based research outcomes. Spreitzer (1995) defined empowerment in terms that reflect an active orientation to the work role, as “a motivational construct manifested in four cognitions: meaning, competence, self-determination, and impact ...which reflect an active, rather than a passive, orientation to the work role.” (p. 1444) She explicitly stated her view that “empowerment is not an enduring personality trait,”(p. 1444) but is shaped by the work environment. Empowerment is subject to change as people change their self-perceptions in relation to work in response to a variety of factors. She also described empowerment as a “continuous variable,” (p.1444) with people being viewed as variably more or less empowered, which could therefore be quantitatively measured and analyzed by statistical methods. Spreitzer identified four antecedents of empowerment which include two pre-existing internal personality variables--locus of control and self esteem--and two external work environment variables--access to information and rewards. She also identified two consequences of psychological empowerment: innovation and managerial effectiveness, and a means to develop a partial nomological network of the construct of psychological empowerment.

As the result of her research in 1991-92 with 393 managers at an industrial Fortune 50 company and 128 employees of an insurance company, Spreitzer (1995) validated the first instrument for assessing the multidimensional construct of psychological empowerment in the workplace. In this study Spreitzer used second order confirmatory factor analysis to evaluate both the convergent and discriminant validity of the empowerment measure, as well as test-retest reliability, in her effort to create greater clarity in the construct of empowerment. In this initial effort to validate a measurement protocol, she established the nomological net which “indicates how personality and work

context variables shape psychological empowerment as well as some of its individual outcomes” (p. 1995).

The following year using the same data set from the 393 middle managers of the Fortune 50 organization, Spreitzer (1996) analyzed the characteristics of social structure that are associated with psychological empowerment. This work examined the role of contextual influence on psychological empowerment through which a particular organization placed constraints on opportunities for psychological and behavioral expression of empowerment. She approached the study from the immediate vicinity of the employee as the unit of analysis in order to assess perceptions within the work role, under the assumption that the immediate environment exerts greater influence on the individual rather than the converse. Features of work design that she incorporated into the study included role ambiguity, span of control, sociopolitical support, access to information, access to resources, and participative unit climate. Survey items were used for all of the areas under investigation using a seven-point Likert scale. The empowerment scale was validated in the previous study. Role ambiguity was measured with an existing organic structure scale created by Zanzi (as cited in Spreitzer, 1996, p. 491) in 1987, but the rest of the items assessing social structure were created for this study. While many of the statistics for this study produced weak results, the overall impact of this particular analysis emphasized the importance of perceptions in research on workplace empowerment, and the value of a highly involving work environment for enhancing opportunities for individual cognitions regarding empowerment.

Spreitzer, De Janasz, and Quinn (1999) further extended the analysis of this data set in a study of the relationship between empowerment and leadership. The change-oriented

leadership dimensions identified for this study included innovation, upward influence, inspiration and monitoring. This study found that empowerment cognitions are found to be positively correlated with three of the dimensions of leadership: innovation, upward-influence, and inspiration. The recommendation advanced by the conclusion of this study is that this information can be used to develop the next generation of leaders with the psychological orientation necessary for operating in turbulent environments characterized by change.

That same year, Spreitzer and Mishra (1999) also published another study focusing on the issue of organizational trust using the same data set. The concept under examination involved the need to balance the individual agency of an empowered individual against the needs of an organization. The mitigating factor for this was organizational goal internalization in a context of support and trust. In contrast to the constant surveillance of the 19th century factory model, in which distrust protected the company from the lack of competence of employees, in the emerging model of the networked organization, developing trust is a key source of competitive organizational advantage (Stewart, 2001). The key elements of trust, from the perspective of organizational leaders, include a willingness to expect that employees will be competent, and that they care about the goals of the organization (Spreitzer & Mishra, 1999). Alignment of individual and organizational interests can be facilitated by means of a system of organizational feedback loops which collect and disseminate information about individual and collective performance. Trust in this study included four dimensions: “concern, competence, reliability, and openness” (p. 166). The results provide support for the theory that high involvement work environments built on a foundation of trust

enhance organizational performance outcomes. By empirically validating the effectiveness of alternatives to the command and control practices of traditional bureaucratic structures, understanding of how to actualize environments that are psychologically empowering is enhanced by this study.

In 2001, Sanjay Menon published his study to validate a three-factor employee Empowerment Scale. Departing from Spreitzer's (1992, 1995, 1996) focus on the interaction between psychological empowerment and contextual variables, Menon (2001) emphasized the measurement of the psychological elements related to power in his protocol. The three factors in this study selected for inclusion were perception of control, perception of competence and organizational goal internalization. As a positivist work, this study endeavored to understand the "true nature" of empowerment. Menon attempted to clarify the individual experience of employees who internalized the effects of organizational empowerment practices. No matter what the organizational intent of a particular activity, the locus of the experience of empowerment resides within the individual, and therefore is idiosyncratic. According to Menon's view, even the most empowering practice will fail to empower an individual who is unable to perceive the opportunity for empowerment. Conversely, individuals with a high predisposition for psychological empowerment will tend to experience empowerment regardless of organizational context. The literature of cognitive psychology refers to this construct as schema, in which complex patterns of cognitions determine how experiences will be perceived and interpreted through a transformation mechanism that shapes incoming information to fit and reinforce preconceived beliefs (Freeman & Dattilio, 1992). Thomas and Velthouse (1990) encouraged this line of investigation when they proposed that

increasing understanding of the psychological dimensions of empowerment would open up the possibility of creating employee development programs that foster psychological empowerment and resilience. The question that emerges from this line of thought, however, is whether or not individuals acculturated to a centralized authoritarian organizational paradigm would be willing to modify their psychological orientation to embrace the experience of psychological empowerment.

For the purposes of construct validation, Menon (2001) defined his view of employee empowerment as follows: “The psychologically empowered state is a cognitive state characterized by a sense of perceived control, competence, and goal internalization” (p. 161). In order to clarify this definition, he gave voice to the experience of an employee.

From the perspective of the individual employee, an empowered employee is one who can say: (a) “I have control over my work and work context”, (b) “I have the personal competence to do my work”, and (c) “I am personally energized by the goals of the organization.” (p. 161)



Figure 2-1: Menon’s Typology of Psychological Empowerment

The component of the perception of control as a psychological element of power that motivates behavior is central to the construct of empowerment (Menon, 2001). In 1972, a series of experiments were conducted in which monkeys were yoked together so that both experienced the same intensity and duration of repeated electrical shock. One of the animals had the capacity to control the noxious stimuli and turn the shock off, and the other did not. This line of research found that the animals that could not control the noxious stressor manifested symptoms associated with physical illness to a much higher degree than the animals who could exercise control (Atkinson, Atkinson & Hilgard, 1981; Rosenhan & Seligman, 1984). The psychological perception of control has been the subject of research in depression in which the habitual pattern of loss of control resulted in the phenomenon called “learned helplessness” (Rosenhan & Seligman, 1984). Rotter (1966, as cited in Pittenger, 2002) also introduced the concept of locus of control which posits that an individual’s perception of the cause of events will have a great deal of influence on their behavior and the effort they are willing to invest in an activity. In the measurement scale developed by Menon (2001), the portion of the construct of empowerment that is accounted for by the element of control parallels the dimension of choice described by Thomas & Velthouse (1990).

Perceived competence refers to an individual’s perception of self-efficacy (Menon, 2001). The perception of competence involves both the belief in one’s ability to accomplish a desired goal, and the correlate ability to mobilize personal resources needed to accomplish the desired goal (Bandura, 1997). By means of the cognitive process of forethought, a person will envision a desired plan of action to achieve a particular goal, which is mediated by the belief in personal competence. The stronger the perception of

competence, the higher the goals that an individual will be willing to attempt, which is a core component of the construct advanced by Thomas & Velthouse (1990).

The final dimension of psychological empowerment, goal internalization, has to do with the psychological energy that an individual is willing to invest in accomplishing a goal (Menon, 2001). The idea associated with this is that it takes the commitment of energy to accomplish any goal, and as the energies of an employee are aligned with achieving the goals of the organization, this congruence will liberate a high degree of organizational power which is a function of empowerment.

Menon (2001) developed a pool of 60 items to measure these three dimensions of empowerment. From that pool, experts in the area of empowerment were engaged to review and evaluate the items with regard to their relevance, conceptual clarity, communication clarity, conciseness, social desirability, and goodness of fit with a particular subscale. The item pool was distilled to 15 items which were administered as a six-point Likert response format survey to 355 part-time business students in Montreal universities who were employed full-time. Due to the bilingual population of Montreal, the employee Empowerment Scale was developed in both French and English. Test-retest reliability was established with a sample of 94 respondents. The purpose of this research was to support the systematic study of the construct of empowerment by capturing the major element of the individual experience of empowerment in a well-designed and standardized instrument.

Qualitative Works

Pennie Foster-Fishman and Christopher Keys (1997) published a qualitative study of empowerment in a large statewide social service bureaucracy that was undergoing change. For the purposes of this research empowerment was defined as “the process of

gaining influence over events and outcomes of importance to an individual or group” (p. 347). Top administrators in the organization believed that the goal of client empowerment would be more likely to occur if the staff people who interacted with them modeled empowerment in their work life, which would improve organizational effectiveness. However, rather than embrace the initiative, the efforts of administrators attempting to implement widespread organizational change from the top down actually surfaced widespread mistrust among employees which threatened to derail the initiative entirely. As Perkins (1995) predicted, it is not just the organizational interests that comprise empowerment, but the interaction between the interests of the individual and the interests of the organization that are aligned and balanced that promote empowerment.

In the Foster-Fishman and Keys (1997) study, the primary purpose of empowerment was to enhance the individual’s control over the important issues in their work life, and the central point of analysis was the ecological interaction between the individual and the organization, where the organizational culture was identified as the mediator of the beliefs, feelings and behaviors of the employees. As the change process toward empowerment was implemented, its success was found to be dependent on the alignment between the individual’s attitude and behavior and the goals of organizational practice along two particular domains.

The first domain of power and control involved the necessary preconditions of individual self-efficacy, with the desire for enhanced control, access to organizational resources, discretion in conduct of work behavior, and autonomy. As Perkins (1995) indicated, the process of empowerment often begins with consciousness raising in which

the person first recognizes that they are in a subordinate position which could be enhanced to make the work environment more satisfying. This study described a condition in which many individuals who were mandated to participate in empowerment activities had no desire for increased control, due largely to the risk averse culture that tended to punish non-compliance. Apparently this large public bureaucratic organization was at odds within itself, so that executive leaders recognized and wanted the value of empowerment in their organization, but the socio-political context was not prepared to support this particular change initiative.

The second domain of inclusion and trust involved the psychological investment of members in the life of the organization which was encouraged through meaningful communication and active participation in the process of decision making. Members with a positive orientation to the organization of faith and trust were more likely to be aligned with its goals, and willing to support new initiatives. This individual/organizational congruence appeared to be a critical element in the process of fostering enhanced empowerment among members. Empowerment was most likely to occur at the local level, where employees were more actively involved, than at the system level where there was less opportunity to actively engage with the larger organization. Foster-Fishman & Keys (1997) concluded that in order for empowerment to actually unfold within an organization, it cannot be mandated as a top down initiative, ignoring the exigencies of culture, and the individual predisposition to engage in activities that involve enhanced personal autonomy and control.

In a follow up study in 1998, Foster-Fishman, Salem, Chibnall, Legler, and Yapchi reanalyzed the qualitative data from the 1997 study with a different set of research

questions using a phenomenological methodology. The purpose of this study was to elaborate the multiple forms of empowerment that were experienced within the large bureaucratic social service organization in order to identify the different contextual elements that shape empowerment within an organization. This analysis identified support for three empowerment themes: (a) access to information and resources, (b) the need for sociopolitical support, and (c) autonomy and control over decision making as critical issues in empowerment research. They also found that there was a powerful influence of local subculture which impacted the success of the empowerment initiative. This research team found that global measures of empowerment would be inadequate for capturing the full expression of empowerment, as they would be limited to the a priori definition applied by leaders in the process of data collection, and would tend to distort the social reality by misrepresenting the actual empowerment experience of people. They recommended an enhanced approach to empowerment research in which positivist methodology would be triangulated with constructivist approach in order to provide a truer picture of the scope and depth of richly textured social reality within organizational life. They indicated that measurement instruments that capture a moment in time are unable to capture the full representation of unfolding experience of empowerment over time, which might better be represented through interviews with participants who could describe their perception of the dynamics of change. The use of purely quantitative operationalization of variables in empowerment research risks silencing the unique and contextual voices of people who might clarify some of the issues that hinder empowerment initiatives that have previously been obscured in research by global measures.

Thomas Potterfield (1999) published a qualitative case study of empowerment in a Fortune 100 company with a global reach in consumer electronics. This company had gone through two very drastic downsizings, one in the mid-70s when their patents expired and they lost the competitive edge, and one in the 1990s when the company was in a period of growth and profitability. Over 10,000 jobs were cut in the second wave of downsizings, which introduced a high degree of mistrust for the company among workers. The company radically restructured and implemented a culture change toward an “empowered work environment” (p. 62). Potterfield approached this study through the lens of critical theory to investigate the tensions in the ideology of power between the espoused theory of empowerment and the latent issues of employee domination by the senior executives in the corporation. For example, senior executives negotiate their personal contracts with a high level of concern for the values of stability and job security, yet the rest of the workers were denied access to this value, and questions related to job security were not permitted to be included in the study. His purpose was to explore this paradox and the potential for empowerment to foster a truly democratic workplace. He interviewed 29 randomly selected employees from a pool of 300 using a semi-structured interview process.

Potterfield (1999) identified two fundamental perspectives in the literature of empowerment: the psychological approach and the relational approach. In order to examine the ideology of power, and the reallocation of power from higher to lower levels within the organization, he drew on the antecedents of empowerment from Rensis Likert, Chris Argyris, and Douglas McGregor. From Likert he drew on the research between high performing and low performing organizations. Low performing organizations were

characterized by management decisions in which workers were given piecemeal tasks for which the best method was prescribed and all aspects of performance were controlled. High performance organizations still retained control of the overall goals, but provided greater latitude for workers to decide how to fulfill the objectives handed down by management. Likert identified societal trends that were changing the expectations of workers toward a greater need for autonomy and participation in decision-making. From Potterfield's view, Likert emphasized the need for organizations to adapt to the changes in the marketplace in order to stay competitive. Argyris highlighted the incongruities between accepted management practices in the 50s and 60s and the emerging knowledge from the social sciences regarding the needs of healthy, mature adults. He identified that the basic needs of workers were frustrated by the workplace demand for dependence, subordination and submission, in which work was fractured, repetitive and dull. He encouraged job enlargement in which employees would have greater control, including power over the work environment, authority, responsibility and decision-making so that they could participate more fully and contribute to increased organizational effectiveness. From McGregor, Potterfield identified some of the negative assumptions about employees that were embedded in the command and control orientation of management. Rather than seeing people as basically incompetent, he encouraged them to see workers as people who desired meaningful work and control over decisions, so he recommended the transfer of power and authority directly to those who were doing the work.

Yet in spite of this early line of promising research, Potterfield (1999) expressed concern over the lack of successful implementation of empowerment initiatives in the workplace and questioned why so little had changed in spite of a great deal of rhetoric

and research on the subject. The focus of his research was on the paradox of power relations that remains at the core of the problem of implementation. In the social science view of empowerment, as described by Rappaport (1995) and Perkins (1995), as well as Potterfield (1999), empowerment occurs when a group of people with little power recognizes their need to exercise some control over circumstances and self-organizes for collective exercise of power. However, as translated into the domains of organizational management, empowerment relies on the good will of upper leadership to give up some of their personal power and control from higher levels to lower, and as Bandura (1997) states so simply, “Those who exercise authority and control do not go around voluntarily granting to others power over resources and entitlements as acts of beneficence” (p. 477). Changing power relations cannot simply flow from those in power giving it up, but by a mutual transformational process whereby those who cultivate a sense of personal efficacy are able to take advantage of the opportunities available to them by removing the constraints that are imposed “by those whose interests are served by them” (p. 477). Potterfield’s primary concern is that organizational leaders are preoccupied with accomplishing preset goals without consideration of the underlying values that make the goals desirable. He concludes that organizations are inept at applying democratic processes to decide which goals are worthy of group effort.

Potterfield (1999) concluded his research with four recommendations for effective implementation of empowerment in the workplace. First, employees need to understand the goals of empowerment in order to embrace the process. Top down imposition of empowerment initiatives is anathema to true employee empowerment. Second, the boundaries of employee decision-making need to be clear. Third, in order for

empowerment to become effective, inconsistencies in the system need to be identified and addressed openly without organizational defensiveness. Fourth, a forum for employee suggestions for improvement needs to be developed in order to foster effective organizational communication.

The Community College as a Locus of Empowerment Research

The focus of this study is on the organization of a public two-year community college that is preparing for a significant wave of change. The community college in America has been undergoing tremendous growth in the past 40 years. George Boggs, the president of the American Association of Community Colleges said in a recent interview, “One could say we are at a crossroads” (as cited in Evelyn, 2004b, p. 348). The kinds of changes that are affecting the community college include an increased demand for services by a population that is projected to swell throughout this decade, with an associated growth in employees to serve the larger student body funded by a diminished supply of resources (Callan, 2003). Particularly in the south, where child poverty is high, and students tend to be relatively underprepared for college level work, the aspirations for college attainment are high (Callan, 2003). The physical structure of community colleges is becoming increasingly decentralized to make college resources more overtly accessible, with multiple campuses, and varied options for distance student learning that include video courses, online courses, and hybrid courses. Rapidly changing technology is transforming the way that institutions educate, as well as the way they organize and report data, and communicate within and without.

However in many community colleges, the bureaucratic structure of the 19th century factory model still prevails, with power and control retained in the inner circle of executive leadership which has tended to erode organizational effectiveness through

defensive routines that stifle upward organizational feedback and limit organizational learning (Argyris, 1999; Malone, 2004; O'Banion, 1997a; O'Banion, 1997b). The layers of separation between executive leadership and the environment serve as insulation that hinders responsive interaction and organizational learning (Alfred, 1998).

When the system is a unified whole, communication of shared knowledge and beliefs allows for subsystem interactions to regulate and solve problems. With differentiation, the system is split into independent causal chains and the processes in the subsystems go on irrespective of each other. The causal chains become inflexible, fixed, and therefore acquire mechanization and less system regulation; thus positive growth systems can develop and lead to decay. (Hayden, 1986, p. 388)

In order to enhance organizational effectiveness many community colleges are taking steps to improve responsiveness to change by fostering an internal process of change that supports employee empowerment (Campbell, 2002; O'Banion, 1997a). The "grow your own" model of leadership development appears to be one way that institutions are stimulating employees to take a greater interest in the coming concerns and changes in community college life (Sharpley & Carroll, 2002). An outgrowth of this preparation for the process of organizational change is that employees would tend to reflect the characteristics of empowerment with a greater sense of personal control, an enhanced perception of personal competence, and an energized alignment with the fundamental mission of the community college. By means of employee empowerment initiatives, the community college can interrupt the causal chains which tend to isolate front line employees from awareness of the consequences of their actions, as well as executives who tend to make decisions in the absence of critical feedback, in order to cultivate enhanced collective decision-making processes (Hayden, 1986).

Components of Empowerment Definition

The main element that has been selected for study is the outcome of the psychological experience of empowerment in the college that has resulted from the deliberate systemic effort to effect a change in the employees, particularly those who participate in leadership development activities. This effort is part of the emerging trend in higher education institutions to take a formative leadership role in American culture as sustainable organizations that value the contributions of all members (Astin & Astin, 1999). The three domains of psychological empowerment selected for inclusion in this research include the components identified by Menon (2001): perceived control, perceived competence, and goal internalization.

Perceived Control: “I have control over my work and work context”

Control has to do with the ability to influence the outcomes of actions in a way that accomplishes the goal that is personally desirable (Bandura, 1997; Menon, 2001). For the purposes of this study, the emphasis in the cognition of control assessed by the Empowerment Survey has to do with the perception of self-determination in the work role (Menon, 2001). Much of the research on locus of control has demonstrated that internal locus of control is associated with a high level of personal responsibility for influencing the outcomes of one’s actions, whereas external locus of control is associated with the attribution that external factors exert greater influence on the outcomes of one’s actions than the individual. The tendency is for individuals who manifest an external locus of control to be more dependent on authority, and less likely to persist when difficulties are encountered. Bureaucratic culture tends to foster perceptions that lean more toward employee dependency and compliance rather than self-determination and personal control (Argyris, 1999; Thomas & Velthouse, 1990). Employees who perceive

that they are able to be in control of their work are more likely to exert increased effort in the face of challenges, and persist with innovative responses when confronted with obstacles (Thomas & Velthouse, 1990; Potterfield, 1999; Pittenger, 2002).

Perceived Competence: “I have the personal competence to do my work”

Perceived competence is related to the construct of self-efficacy in which a person perceives that they are able to produce the desired criterion by means of their effort (Bandura, 1997). This component of empowerment has to do with the psychological expectation of personal ability regarding the tasks toward which their efforts are directed (Bandura, 1997; Spieker & Hinsz, 2004). If a person believes they are competent, they will be more likely to persist in the face of obstacles, as long as the obstacle involves solving problems related to an individual’s perception of competence (Pittenger, 2002; Spieker & Hinsz, 2004). Competence is also associated with self-esteem, particularly in the line of research associated with self-esteem that is attached to the process of motivating achievement (Arndt & Schimel, 2003). There is a strong trend in empowerment literature that supports the idea that the employee is the expert in their job, and therefore with access to information about organizational performance, they are able to grow in competence as they exercise the ability to monitor their contribution to the organization’s functioning (Senge, 1990; Potterfield, 1999; Argyris, 1999; Malone, 2004). Perceptions of competence are particularly vulnerable during learning activities where the individual is involved in taking risks to acquire or develop new skills (Pittenger, 2002; Arndt & Schimel, 2003). Environments that support the expression of mature competence of employees facilitate empowerment by permitting risk-taking as novel situations are encountered (Brown, 2002; Pittenger, 2002). Environments that

promote competence also honor balancing feedback from employees in support of organizational learning, even when it involves difficult information about the organization (Argyris, 1999; Brown, 2002).

Goal Internalization: “I am personally energized by the goals of the organization”

Congruence between the goals an individual believes in and organizational goals is an important aspect of empowerment articulated by Thomas & Velthouse (1990). When individual and organizational goals are aligned, all of the energy that a person contributes to their work is able to contribute to the goals of the organization. The less these elements are aligned, the smaller the portion of an employee’s energy contributes to effective organizational functioning. Two aspects of this component of psychological empowerment are trust and faith. People demonstrate greater effort when they work toward goals that are personally meaningful (Thomas & Velthouse, 1990; Senge, 1990).

Gestalt of Psychological Empowerment Construct

Empowerment is a construct that has been applied to describe multiple different aspects of organizational life. In most research conducted in organizations which involve employee empowerment, the construct generally refers to some kind of process for delegation of power or authority in some limited or constrained way from higher to lower levels within the organization (Argyris, 1999; Potterfield, 1999). However, most empowerment initiatives fail to achieve their intended goals due to the resistance to mandated change in responsibilities. Senge’s (1990) discipline of mental models offers some explanation of this resistance. With this perspective in mind, it would not be unusual for employees to offer resistance to change in the normal power relations that contradict the beliefs and expectations that operate as unconscious assumptions in organizational life. An alternative approach to engaging an organization in meaningful

change on the road to improving overall effectiveness, is to nurture employee growth, and foster the emergence of authentic empowerment as people learn to assume greater responsibility for their actions as competent adults working together collaboratively (Argyris, 1999; Senge, 1990; Potterfield, 1999; Malone, 2004). Intrinsic power emerges as a capacity of responsible adults who perceive organizational interrelationships, and understand the importance of their part in the whole design (Argyris, 1999; Potterfield, 1999). The perception of control, competence, and personal alignment with organizational goals form a meaningful whole of the construct of psychological empowerment that is associated with a sense of organizational stewardship (Argyris, 1999). By means of authentic empowerment, it is anticipated that employees who are participants in leadership development would perceive that they are active participants in the shaping of a new social reality in the community college as they work together to generate new learning of what it means to be a part of the community college in the 21st century.

Summary

This chapter has introduced that major concepts associated with the topic of employee empowerment. In particular, the focus of this literature review has centered on the various perspectives in the research on psychological empowerment of employees. Theoretical, quantitative, and qualitative studies have been examined in order to gather a coherent understanding of the meaning of psychological empowerment. The context of the community college has also been examined as a locus for research in employee empowerment.

Chapter 3 will build on this framework for the study of employee empowerment. In that chapter, the methodology that will be used to conduct this study will be described.

CHAPTER 3 RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

The purpose of this study is to explore the construct of empowerment from the point of view of the psychological experience of employees in a community college that is preparing for organizational change. The plan to conduct this two-phase sequential mixed-methods study was to first evaluate, quantitatively, the differences in the cognitive state of empowerment between community college employees who participated in an institutional leadership development program and those who had not (Creswell, 2003). Second, this study utilized qualitative interview data to explore in depth the beliefs, experiences, and behaviors that formed the basis of the responses to the quantitative employee Empowerment Scale scores of a selected sample of 18 individuals to gather a fuller and richer understanding of the ways in which the cognitive state of empowerment is socially constructed in the workplace of the community college (Creswell, 2003, Glesne, 1999). This study sought to answer the following research questions:

1. Are there differences in the measure of employee empowerment between community college employees who have engaged in a yearlong leadership development program and those who have not?
2. What are the experiences and beliefs that contribute to or explain psychological empowerment for different groups of community college employees?
3. What behaviors are most closely associated with the cognitive state of empowerment in the community college workplace?

Theoretical Orientation

The lens of social construction theory has been selected as a filter through which to view this research for a variety of reasons. First, although empowerment is a construct that has enjoyed a great deal of thoughtful attention in the past several decades, there is relatively little conceptual agreement about what it is or is not, because empowerment does not exist out there as a purely objective reality that can be “accurately” perceived and measured. Rather empowerment is a term that captures an element of social reality that can be meaningfully identified, clarified, explored and discussed, but about which there is limited definitional clarity or agreement because exactly what empowerment is continues to emerge as a construct through dialogue, discussion and practical application. Applying the theory of social construction to this research provides a conceptual framework as a point of departure for the pursuit of this particular research problem. By triangulating a constructionist approach with traditional positivist approach, it is desirable for the breadth and scope of quantitative data to be enhanced by the depth and texture of qualitative data.

Context and Population

The Leadership Cultivation Program (LCP) of the community college under investigation, was designed to enhance the leadership potential of all participants by means of a yearlong process that included a combination of group didactic activities, institutional projects, personal reflection experiences, and cultivation of individual mentoring and sponsorship relationships between participants and senior leaders in the community college. Do the employees who are graduates of the LCP program reflect higher levels of the cognitive state of empowerment than employees who were not participants?

In the first phase of this study the research hypothesis employed quantitative methods to analyze data from the employee Empowerment Scale developed by Sanjay Menon (2001). Data was gathered and analyzed to address the relationship between the cognitive state of empowerment for the participants of the LCP and a matched sample of non-participant employees at this community college. Then in the second phase, follow up interviews with 18 individuals were conducted to explore those results in more depth. The rationale for using both quantitative and qualitative data was to develop a richer understanding of the socially constructed meaning of employee empowerment in the community college workplace.

Target Population

A sample of employees of this mid-sized, urban community college in a southern state have been chosen for this study. This institution operates with a centralized system for most administrative functions, with selected services available at five outlying branch campuses. This institution has been engaging in a systematic plan to cultivate the leadership potential of employees in preparation for the impending retirements of many of the senior staff throughout the institution. The original cohort of 98 employee participants in the Leadership Cultivation Program (LCP) was selected after each individual submitted a detailed portfolio application to the LCP leadership team in June of 2003. This group consisted of a diverse mixture of career service staff members, professional staff, faculty, and administrators. Participants at all levels and from all campuses within the organization were encouraged to apply in order for the program to foster understanding and skills that might contribute to the enhancement of employees throughout the bureaucratic structure of the institution. All participants were required to have completed at least one full academic year of employment in the institution prior to

the formal start of the program. The participants of the LCP will be the target population for the study of the psychological construct of empowerment.

Control Group

A corresponding sample of employees who did not participate in the LCP were selected from the population of full-time employees who had worked for this community college at least one year at the time the LCP began. For the purposes of this study, nonparticipant employees were drawn from the pool of full-time employees who did not apply for the LCP. Nonparticipant employees were matched to the cohort of LCP graduates based on category of employment career service staff members, professional staff, faculty, and administrators. Menon (2001) reports that the scores of the Empowerment Scale can be used to compare groups within the institution.

Description of Empowerment Scale

The employee Empowerment Scale was developed by Sanjay Menon (2001) as a tool to measure the psychological experience of personal power that underlies the feelings of empowerment. The definition Menon used in the development of this instrument was: "Empowerment is a psychological construct in which the cognitive state is characterized by a sense of perceived control, competence, and goal internalization" (p. 161). This scale consists of nine items with a 6-point Likert response format. The scale is organized into three factors that have demonstrated good internal consistency and test-retest reliabilities: Perceived Control (0.86 test-retest reliability), Perceived Competence (0.78 test-retest reliability), and Goal Internalization (0.86 test-retest reliability).

The construct of psychological empowerment is conceived as an additive function of these three components. The stability of the factor structure of this research instrument is confirmed by factor analysis, which revealed no interaction effects among subscales

(Menon, 2001). Evidence of construct validity was defined by means of strong positive correlations with the Spreitzer (1995, 1996) scale of empowerment, and a negative correlation with the Ashforth (1989) scale of helplessness (Menon, 2001). In sum, the Empowerment Scale demonstrates solid psychometric properties that will permit valid and reliable conclusions to be drawn from the data gathered from participants in this study.

Quantitative Methodology

All potential participants in the study were identified by the Human Resources Department and the coordinator of the LCP by means of two lists of employees broken down by employee category: career service staff members, professional staff, faculty, and administrators. The two lists included all full-time employees in one, and all employees who had participated in the LCP in the other. The names of the LCP participants were culled from the list of full-time employees, and both lists were sorted into the four employment categories. A randomized sample of equivalent size to the LCP groups was drawn from the total population of employees for each of the employment categories, so that there were 98 participants in each group.

Potential participants in both groups were contacted via campus email to invite them to participate in the study. All full-time employees have access to email and are encouraged to use it as a regular method of organizational communication. Follow up contact with each individual was made to obtain informed consent for those who agreed to participate. Participants who were continuing in the second year of the LCP were contacted at a gathering of that group, and the informed consent was collected for those candidates at that time. Also, a card was also given soliciting a pseudonym to be used for participants who might be selected for the qualitative portion of the study. Non-

participant employees who agreed to participate were emailed a copy of the informed consent and asked to return the signed copy when they completed the survey.

The Information Services Department of the community college was contacted, and agreed to set up a website with the nine items of the Empowerment Scale. This was a secure link, and only the invited participants had access to the website. The secure website for the employee Empowerment Scale required participants to log in with a personal identification screen prior to responding to the items. Participants in this study were emailed the link with instructions as to how to log in to the site. A two-week deadline was given for participants to complete the survey for this study, and individuals who had not completed the instrument were reminded one-week prior to the deadline in order to secure maximum participation. After the two weeks had passed, all potential participants who had yet to respond were sent a hard copy of the survey and informed consent through campus mail with the instructions for returning the completed survey to the researcher. In all 142 participants responded yielding a 72% rate of return.

Research question one: Are there differences in the measure of employee empowerment between community college employees who have engaged in a yearlong leadership development program and those who have not?

Following data collection, scores were grouped for analysis based on employee category:

Table 3-1: Basic Categories for Data Analysis

Faculty Participants	Administrator Participants	Professional Staff Participants	Career Service Staff Participants	Total Participants
Faculty Non-participants	Administrator Non-participants	Professional Staff Non-participants	Career Service Staff Non-participants	Total Non-participants

Quantitative Analysis

The psychological construct of employee empowerment is conceived for this study as a function of three elements that are necessary and sufficient for the experience of psychological empowerment. This question was addressed by first analyzing the employee Empowerment Scale score distributions between the two groups of LCP participants and non-participants using Analysis of Variance (Penfield, 2003). The research hypothesis for this analysis was:

Hypothesis A: Psychological empowerment of employees was greater for participants of the LCP than for non-participants.

H₀: The mean empowerment score was identical for both employees who have participated in the LCP and non-participant employees.

H_a: The mean empowerment score was different for employees who participated in the LCP than non-participants employees.

Second, analysis of differences between employment groups was conducted to determine the impact of employment classification on empowerment scores.

Hypothesis B: There was a difference in the psychological empowerment of employees for different categories of employees.

H₀: The mean empowerment score was identical for all categories of employees.

H_a: The mean empowerment score was not identical for all categories of employees.

Finally, differences that might express an interaction between participation in the LCP and interaction with differences in employment classification will be explored.

Hypothesis C: There was an interaction in the psychological empowerment of employees between the category of employment and level of participation in the LCP.

H₀: The mean empowerment scores across the levels of participation in the LCP were not dependent on the category of empowerment.

H_a: The mean empowerment scores across the levels of participation in the LCP were dependent on the category of empowerment.

A Type I error rate of 0.05 was used for all calculations.

Qualitative Design

The issue of empowerment was explored qualitatively through the lens of a social construction theoretical framework. Selected members of the college community were interviewed in depth in order to gather data from which to organize a meaningful understanding of the processes that may contribute to the psychological experience of empowerment, particularly for participants of the LCP, due to the intentional nature of the program to foster an institutional environment that supports organizational learning while it cultivates new leaders who are preparing the way for a vital, sustainable culture in preparation for a period of significant change in leadership.

Following administration of the employee Empowerment Scale, 18 employees were selected for follow up interviews based on a maximum variation sampling method. Initially each cell in Table 1 was analyzed for the range of participant's scores. A minimum of one high scoring and one low scoring participant from each cell was selected for interviewing. From this initial analysis, 16 participants were identified for follow up data collection. By means of this strategy for participant selection, a diverse group of respondents were interviewed to capture a wide range of perspectives related to the elements of the construct of psychological empowerment.

Table 3-2: Maximum Variation Sampling Strategy

Faculty	Administrator	Professional	Career Service
1 Participant High Score	2 Participant High Score	3 Participant High Score	4 Participant High Score
5 Participant Low Score	6 Participant Low Score	7 Participant Low Score	8 Participant Low Score
9 Nonparticipant High Score	10 Nonparticipant High Score	11 Nonparticipant High Score	12 Nonparticipant High Score
13 Nonparticipant Low Score	14 Nonparticipant Low Score	15 Nonparticipant Low Score	16 Nonparticipant Low Score

In several cells there were multiple respondents with the same score. In that case, additional features were considered to select among possible participants for maximum variations including gender, racial or ethnic variation, and distribution among the geographical locations of the college. In several cases, individuals who were selected for follow up interviews declined to participate in that aspect of the study, which reduced the pool of candidates for interviews. Two additional subjects were interviewed beyond the minimum of one per cell. Following the interview of one administrator who had been closely affiliated with the LCP, it was determined that his responses did not reflect a typical pattern of a participant, because he spoke in an authoritative voice as the creator of the program, so an additional administrator was selected in order to insure diversity of perspectives. To balance the addition of one more high scoring employee, another low scoring non-participant was selected for interviewing. Interviews were conducted with a total of 18 employees of the community college, nine of whom were participants in the LCP, and nine of whom were non-participants in the LCP. Five of the employees selected for interviews were faculty, five were administrators, four were professional staff members, and four were career service staff members. Each interview took from 40 to 75 minutes. Participants in this part of the study were given a copy of the interview protocol immediately prior to the session in order to put them at ease with the knowledge of what

to expect during the session (Ivey, 1988). Employees were interviewed at a convenient time and location of their own choosing. A semi-structured interview protocol (See appendix B) was used to explore the meaning of the psychological experience of empowerment in greater depth in order to address the following qualitative research questions.

Research question two: What are the experiences and beliefs that contribute to or explain psychological empowerment for different groups of community college employees?

The construct of psychological empowerment, as measured by the Empowerment Scale, has been defined as “a cognitive state characterized by a sense of perceived control, competence, and goal internalization” (Menon, 2001). In order to gather data regarding the beliefs and experiences of community college employees regarding the psychological experience of empowerment in the work environment, open questions were developed that aligned with each of these broad components of empowerment according to the recommendations of Glesne (1999) and Strauss & Corbin (1998). Open questions are designed to encourage participants to talk and provide maximum information on the topic of the interview (Ivey, 1988). The focus of these interview questions was primarily oriented toward eliciting concrete descriptions of specific ways that each subject may have developed beliefs regarding the perception of personal control and competence in the community college work environment, as well as the degree to which each subject experienced a sense of being aligned with the goals of the community college. Interview questions were developed to approach the issues of empowerment from several different

perspectives in order to illuminate the social construction of the cognition of psychological empowerment in the participants' work lives (Glesne, 1999).

Respondents were selected from the high and low score responses of the employee Empowerment Scale in each category. Eighteen people (18) were interviewed in a semi-structured format to identify the experiences that they have had that contributed to the endorsement of their particular responses on this instrument in order to explore more fully the beliefs that sustained their perception of control or lack of control, their perception of competence or lack of competence, and the degree to which they had internalized the goals of the institution. Interviews were conducted in a place of each participant's choosing in order to establish for each one a sense of comfort and control over the interview process. Specific experiences that contributed to or shaped their beliefs were also be probed in order to gather as much data as necessary to clarify the processes involved in the social construction of the cognition of empowerment (Glesne, 1999).

Research question three: What behaviors are most closely associated with the cognitive state of empowerment in the community college workplace?

This question was also explored through the interview data as respondents were asked to recall the specific behaviors that each had experienced or enacted in the community college work environment that reflected various components of the cognitive state of empowerment. The interview questions from both research questions were intermingled in a sequence that was intended to facilitate maximum self-disclosure over the course of the interview as rapport increased (Ivey, 1988). The meaning of personal actions and interactions in the workplace that demonstrate the psychological construct of empowerment were explored in order to better understand the social construction of the

meaning of empowerment as it contributed to the social environment of this community college workplace.

Qualitative Data Analysis

All interviews were audio-recorded and transcribed verbatim. Secretarial support was used to assist with transcription. Interview data was analyzed using Hatch's typology method. Cross-case analysis across the 18 interviews was used to analyze different perspectives on the central issue of empowerment of community college employees. An inductive process for category coding was used to discover relationships within the data regarding the experiences, beliefs and behaviors that underlie the psychological construct of employee empowerment (Coffey & Atkinson, 1996; Creswell, 2003; Strauss & Corbin, 1998).

Using the method described by Hatch, the first step in typological analysis of qualitative research was to "identify the typologies to be analyzed" (Hatch, 2002, p. 153). The typologies for this study of employee empowerment were identified using both the literature on empowerment and the research questions as a starting point for this analysis. The employee Empowerment Scale was developed by Sanjay Menon (2001) as a tool to measure the psychological experience of empowerment. The definition Menon used in the development of this instrument was "Empowerment is a psychological construct in which the cognitive state is characterized by a sense of perceived control, competence, and goal internalization" (p. 161). By definition, psychological empowerment is an intrinsic experience, but it is enacted in a social context, so the manifestation of psychological empowerment is enacted in a specific socio-cultural situation in which the individual participates with other people. Analysis of the qualitative data for this study focused on the emphasis of the research questions--the beliefs, experiences, and

behaviors of participants--incorporating descriptions of behavioral elements of other people given by the participants as they recalled experiences in the work environment.

This study utilized qualitative interview data to explore in depth the three preliminary typologies of beliefs, experiences, and behaviors that form the psychological basis of the responses to the quantitative employee Empowerment Scale scores of a selected sample of individuals, in order to gather a fuller and richer understanding of the ways in which the cognitive state of empowerment was socially constructed in the workplace of the community college. The category of experiences included any statement that described something that happened to the individual as the result of an extrinsic stimulus: something that the person witnessed, learned from another person or persons, or through involvement with the environment. Beliefs involved respondent's descriptions of their thoughts, including thoughts about actions or experiences that are anticipated but have not yet happened. Behaviors included any specific action statement in which the respondent described what they do or have done. Sometimes, a single response contained elements of more than one item type; such responses may appear in more than one subset of data in order to provide the most complete data set for each component. Each of the three basic typologies was composed of elements relating to the three components of Menon's psychological empowerment used in this study: perceived competence, perceived control, and goal internalization.

In the second step, all data was read and all responses marked for the typology. A separate document was created for each of the preliminary three typologies, experiences, beliefs and behaviors, for each of the 18 interviews. Then each of those 54 documents was further partitioned into the three domains of empowerment. At the conclusion of this

step, there were nine categories of items for each of the 18 interviews. In the third step, the main ideas for each interview were organized into summaries using the participant's own words. The purpose of this step was to begin to reduce the large volume of data into a preliminary meaningful form (Hatch, 2002). In step four, each list was analyzed for patterns, relationships or themes that might be present within the specific typology. Patterns in the data might include similarities, differences, frequency of occurrence, sequence, correlation, or causation. Relationships consisted of semantic links found in the data. Relationships represented in the data were coded and organized into hypotheses that permitted exploration of the relationships among the various elements found within each data set. Patterns of relationships within each typology were explored. Themes represented integrating concepts that emerged as meaningful threads through a significant portion of the data. At the end of this step, a body of "hypothetical patterns, relationships or themes" (p.156) was produced.

Step five in the typology method involved reading again through all of the data within the typologies with the understanding of these "hypothetical patterns, relationships or themes" of the previous step as a vantage point from which to view and interpret the data, and coding all of the excerpts that correspond to the patterns, relationships and themes with the greatest potential for explanation of the social construction of psychological empowerment in the work environment of the community college (Hatch, 2002).

In step six, all of the interviews were reread with the purpose of judging which "categories are justified by the data" (Hatch, 2002; p. 157). From this step in the analysis the goal was to refine and consolidate interpretation of the data, so that relationships in

the data were clear, and examples of each component were clearly identified. Next in step six a decision was made about whether or not the data supports the categories by means of a search for disconfirming evidence. In order to accomplish this, a search was conducted within the total data set for examples that did not fit with, or run counter to, the relationships previously identified. This resulted in making decisions about whether or not the evidence was strong enough to build a case for the conclusions. Any contradictory information was explained or faulty conclusions were revised.

Once the separate categories were supported and clarified, in step seven, an analysis across all of the categories was conducted to look for relationships among the different categories (Hatch, 2002). This was completed for all of the data provided by all of the interview participants. As recommended by Hatch, a graphical illustration of the overarching patterns discovered among the respondent's data was developed to permit a more coherent sense of the data to emerge. Then in step eight, a one sentence generalization that expressed the relationship between two or more concepts was generated for each of the findings. The final stage of data analysis involved a search through the entire data set to locate specific, powerful excerpts that captured the meaning of the various elements of psychological empowerment to permit readers to hear the voices of the participants.

Summary

This study used a two-phase mixed methods empirical approach to explore the intentional cultivation of the psychological construct of empowerment in a broad base of employees who participated in a Leadership Cultivation Program (LCP) in the community college where they work. This program was a preliminary step in developing a sustainable learning organization in a community college preparing for leadership

change. The first phase of this study utilized quantitative data to answer the research question: Are there differences in the measure of employee empowerment between community college employees who have engaged in a yearlong leadership development program and those who have not? Data was gathered from a nine question Empowerment Scale survey (Menon, 2001). Analysis was conducted using analysis of variance (Penfield, 2003).

The second phase of this study involved collection and analysis of qualitative data to explore the experiences, beliefs, and behaviors associated with the psychological empowerment of a select group of participants. Subjects were selected who demonstrated the potential for providing maximum variation of understanding regarding the social construction of the psychological state of empowerment among community college employees in this case study.

Chapter 4 of this study will provide the results of the quantitative component of this study. All data will be summarized and analyzed by means of analysis of variance.

CHAPTER 4 QUANTITATIVE ANALYSIS AND DISCUSSION

This study is divided into two phases. In this first phase, quantitative data from the employee Empowerment Scale (Menon, 2001) has been collected and analyzed to evaluate the differences in the cognitive state of empowerment between community college employees who participated in an institutional leadership development program (LCP) and those who did not. This chapter examines the quantitative data collected to explore the first research question: Are there differences in the measure of employee empowerment between community college employees who have engaged in a yearlong leadership development program and those who have not?

Selection, Assignment and Number of Candidates

Candidates for this study were selected from two groups of the community college's employees: all 98 employees who had participated in a yearlong Leadership Cultivation Program (LCP) and an additional group of 98 employees who did not participate in the LCP. The 98 non-LCP candidates were selected from the total population of community college employees. This group represented four employment categories: career service, professional, faculty, and administrator. In order to match the LCP employee group, candidates were required to have at least one full year of employment at the institution. Candidates within each employment category were selected randomly to match the total number of LCP participants in that category. All candidates were invited to participate via email correspondence that included a copy of the informed consent and a link to the online survey.

After the start of data collection, one candidate called to confirm that he met the criteria before completing the survey. As it turned out, he had been employed for an insufficient period of time, and so was disqualified from participating. Follow up inquiry revealed that several non- LCP candidates did not meet the criteria of one full year of employment, and they were subsequently excluded from data collection. Out of the total pool of 196 candidates that were selected to participate in this study, 17 were eliminated for one of two reasons: they did not meet the criteria of one full year of employment or they had separated from the college. Two additional candidates asked not to be included in the study for personal reasons. Table 1 shows the final breakdown of candidates for this study based on the two independent variables: LCP participation and employment category.

Table 4-1: Number and Percentages of Candidates based on LCP Participation and Employment Category

LCP Participation	Employment Category								
	Career Service		Professional		Faculty		Administrator		Total
	n	%	n	%	n	%	n	%	n
LCP Participant	13	14.1%	21	22.8%	31	33.7%	27	29.3%	92
Non-participant	15	17.6%	15	17.6%	33	38.8%	22	25.9%	85
Totals	28	15.8%	36	20.3%	64	36.1%	49	27.8%	177

The unequal numbers in each of the groups of the LCP reflects the voluntary nature of the group. Faculty and administrators participated at a much higher rate than career service or professionals. The sizes of the LCP groups differed slightly from the original cohort of 98 participants primarily due to employee separations. The sizes of the matching groups were affected by one additional systematic factor: individuals identified after the study began who did not meet the criteria of one-full year of employment.

Participation Rates

Of the 177 valid candidates who were asked to participate, 139 responded to the employee Empowerment Scale (Menon, 2001) yielding a 78.5% rate of return. Of those 139, 79 (56.8%) had participated in the Leadership Cultivation Program, and 60 (43.2%) did not (See Table 4-2). Respondents consisted of a diverse mixture of employee categories: 28.8% were administrators, 38.1% were faculty, 17.3% were professional staff members, and 15.8% were career service staff. There were 37 invited candidates for the study who did not respond to the Empowerment Scale: 13 had participated in the LCP (35.1%), and 24 did not (64.9%). One candidate submitted a partial response, and then discontinued, only to complete data submission a second time. The first data set was not included in the analysis. Another candidate logged in and completed the survey with an intermittent pattern of incomplete responses. This survey was not analyzed. By the end of the quantitative data collection phase a total of 142 surveys were submitted. Of those, 139 usable responses were included in the data analysis

Table 4-2: Numbers and Percentages of Respondents and Non-respondents by LCP and Employment Category

Respondents	LCP Participants		Nonparticipants		SubTotals	
Career	13	100%	9	60%	22	78.6%
Professional	17	81%	7	47%	24	66.7%
Faculty	25	81%	28	85%	53	82.8%
Administrator	24	89%	16	72%	40	81.6%
Subtotal	79	86%	60	71%	139	78.5%
Nonrespondents						
Career	0	0%	6	40%	6	21.4%
Professional	4	19%	8	53%	12	33.3%
Faculty	6	19%	5	15%	11	17.2%
Administrator	3	11%	6	28%	9	18.4%
Subtotal	13	14%	25	29%	38	21.5%
Total	92		85		177	

Table 4-2 shows that of the 92 LCP participants invited to respond to the Empowerment Scale, 79 (85.9%) submitted responses, compared to 60 of the 85 non-participants (70.6%). In all categories of employment, more than 80% of the LCP participants completed the Empowerment Scale (Menon, 2001). In the category of career service employees, 100% of the LCP participants provided responses to the Empowerment Survey as compared to 60% of the non-participants. Faculty were the only category of non-participants employees who participated in this study at a higher rate (85%) than LCP participants (81%). The lowest rate of response was found in non-LCP professional employees (47%).

Wave Analysis of Early v. Late Respondents

Responses to the Empowerment Scale (Menon, 2001) were provided in two distinct waves. The first wave of responses began immediately after participants were invited through email to take the survey online. After the first week, a second reminder was sent and a few more responses were completed online. A total of 97 usable responses (69.8%) were submitted online during the first 10 days. When no responses were submitted for a full week, a third request in the form of a personal letter was sent through inter-campus mail to each candidate who had not responded inviting them again to submit their responses to the survey. This letter included a paper copy of both the informed consent and the Empowerment Scale, in addition to the information about how to complete the survey online. This request yielded 42 additional responses (30.2%), all of which were submitted by return mail. Table 4-3 shows the pattern of early, late and non-responses based on LCP participation and employment category.

All of the late respondents who were reminded via personal letter to complete the Empowerment Scale submitted their responses by hard copy anonymously rather than

online. The online survey prompted respondents to provide their name, which was then separated from the survey data. Of the 42 anonymous responses, 17 had participated in the LCP (40.5%), and 25 had not (60.4%). According to Creswell (2003, p. 160), “those who return surveys in the final weeks of response period are nearly non-respondents”, therefore patterns of response bias found in the data that are common to both late respondents and non-respondents may shed additional light on the variable under investigation. In this case, the fact that all late respondents provided data anonymously suggests the possibility that there may be an underlying factor that promotes the delayed or non-response pattern. Table 4-3 examines the pattern between the early responses, late responses and non-responses.

Table 4-3: Wave Analysis of Early and Late Responders by LCP Participation and Employment Category

Employee Category	Early Respondents; LCP Participants			Early Respondents; Nonparticipants			Total Early Respondents
Career	13/13	-	100%	4/15	-	26.7%	17/28 (60.7%)
Professional	14/21	-	66.7%	5/15	-	33.3%	19/36 (52.8%)
Faculty	15/31	-	48.4%	15/33	-	45.5%	30/64 (46.9%)
Administrator	20/27	-	74.1%	11/22	-	50%	31/49 (63.3%)
Subtotal	62/92	-	67.4%	35/85	-	41.2%	97/177 (54.8%)
Late or Non Respondent	Late	Non		Late	Non		Total Late or Non-respondents
Career	0/13	0/13	0%	5/15	6/15	73.3%	11/28 (39.3%)
Professional	3/21	4/21	33.3%	2/15	8/15	66.7%	17/36 (47.2%)
Faculty	10/31	6/31	51.6%	13/33	5/33	54.5%	34/64 (53.1%)
Administrator	4/27	3/27	25.9%	5/22	6/22	50%	18/49 (36.7%)
Subtotal	17/92	13/92	32.6%	25/85	25/85	58.8%	80/177 (45.2%)

If an association is made between the anonymous late respondents and the non-respondents, 30 of the LCP participants (32.6% of the LCP candidates) responded late or not at all, as compared to 50 of the non-participants (58.8%). All of the career employees who participated in the LCP responded in the first wave, but only 4 (26.7%) who had not participated in the LCP responded in the first wave (See Table 4-3). At the opposite end

of the hierarchy, 20 of the administrators in the LCP responded early (74.1%), while 7 responded late or not at all (25.9%), but non-participants were evenly divided with 11 (50%) responding early, and 11 (50%) delayed or no response.

Overall, the majority of LCP participants tended to respond early (67.4%), rather than late or not at all (see Table 4-4). The majority of non-participants in the LCP (58.8%) responded late or not at all (see Table 4-4).

Table 4-4: Response Bias

LCP Participants				Non-participants			
Early	% age	Late or Non	% age	Early	% age	Late or Non	% age
62/92	67.4%	30/92	32.6%	35/85	41.2%	50/85	58.8%

Descriptive Statistics

The first step in analysis of the quantitative data involved organizing responses into cells to identify high and low scoring respondents in each of the eight categories. The purpose of this step was to prepare for maximum variation sampling by identifying the respondents with the most diverse scores who would later be asked to provide qualitative data. Anonymous respondents were excluded from this step. Next, within each cell, the basic descriptive statistics were calculated using all responses, and preliminary observations of the data were made. The output of the Empowerment Scale (Menon, 2001) for each respondent included a full-scale empowerment score and three subscale scores of perceived control, perceived competence, and goal internalization. Full-scale empowerment scores ranged from 9 to 54. The mean of all empowerment scores was 46.73 with a standard deviation of 7.45 (See Table 4-5). In general the data did not meet the conditions required for a normal distribution. Rather the data was negatively skewed. Each of the subscales ranged from a possible low of 3 to a possible high of 18 (See Table

4-5). Subscale scores of the Empowerment Scale all ranged from 3 to 18: perceived control ($M = 14.45$, $SD = 3.87$), perceived competence ($M = 17.21$, $SD = 2.35$), and goal internalization ($M = 15.15$, $SD = 3.28$).

As an additive function of the three subscale scores, the means for all groups for the Empowerment Scale total score were similarly negatively skewed (See Table 4-5). The mean of the Empowerment Scale total score for the participants in the LCP was 47.05 ($SD = 8.46$), and the mean for non-participant employees was 46.32 ($SD = 5.89$) (See Table 4-5). The variance in the range of scores was much smaller for the employees who were not involved with the LCP. Perceived control scores were very similar for LCP participants ($M = 14.51$, $SD = 4.14$) and non-participants ($M = 14.37$, $SD = 3.52$).

Table 4-5: Means and Standard Deviation of Empowerment Scores by Leadership Cultivation Program Participation

	LCP	M	SD	n
Perceived Control (Range 3-18)	Non Participant	14.37	3.52	60
	Participant	14.51	4.14	79
	Total	14.45	3.87	139
Perceived Competence (Range 3-18)	Non Participant	17.65	0.76	60
	Participant	16.87	3.01	79
	Total	17.21	2.35	139
Goal Internalization (Range 3-18)	Non Participant	14.45	3.76	60
	Participant	15.68	2.78	79
	Total	15.15	3.28	139
Empowerment (Range 9-54)	Non Participant	46.32	5.89	60
	Participant	47.05	8.46	79
	Total	46.73	7.45	139

Perceived competence scores were the most negatively skewed of the scores, which was similar for both LCP participants ($M = 16.87$, $SD = 3.01$) and non-participants ($M = 17.65$, $SD = 0.76$) (See Table 4-5). The typical score varied less than one point from the mean. Goal internalization scores were slightly more differentiated for LCP participants ($M = 15.68$, $SD = 2.78$) and non-participants ($M = 14.45$, $SD = 3.76$).

Table 4-6 expresses means and standard deviations of Empowerment Scale scores by employment category: career service (M = 44.95, SD = 7.61), professional (M = 48.29, SD = 4.33), faculty (M = 45.40, SD = 7.29), and administrator (M = 48.55, SD = 8.61). Means for both administrators and professionals were over two points higher than faculty and career service. The standard deviation of empowerment scores for professionals was much narrower than the other three groups (See Table 4-6). Greater variation was also observed when perceived control was organized by employment category: administrator (M = 15.85, SD = 3.79), faculty (M = 13.75, SD = 3.38), professional (M = 15.29, SD = 2.99), and career service (M = 12.64, SD = 4.95).

Table 4-6: Means and Standard Deviation of Empowerment Scores by Employee Category

	Employee Category	M	SD	n
Perceived Control	Administrator	15.85	3.79	40
	Career Service	12.64	4.95	22
	Faculty	13.75	3.38	53
	Professional	15.29	2.99	24
	Total	14.45	3.87	139
Perceived Competence	Administrator	17.25	2.40	40
	Career Service	17.05	1.70	22
	Faculty	17.08	2.95	53
	Professional	17.58	0.93	24
	Total	17.21	2.35	139
Goal Internalization	Administrator	15.53	3.67	40
	Career Service	15.23	3.53	22
	Faculty	14.62	3.38	53
	Professional	15.63	1.88	24
	Total	15.15	3.28	139
Empowerment	Administrator	48.55	8.61	40
	Career Service	44.95	7.61	22
	Faculty	45.40	7.29	53
	Professional	48.29	4.33	24
	Total	46.73	7.45	139

When perceived competence was organized by employment category, only 0.53 points distinguished between the high and low means (See Table 4-6): administrator (M

17.25 = , SD = 2.40), faculty (M = 17.08, SD = 2.95), professional (M = 17.58, SD = 0.93), and career service (M = 17.05, SD = 1.70). Means for all groups were above 17 on an 18-point scale. Even so, faculty scores produced a standard deviation of 2.95, while professional employees only 0.93.

Some variation was observed when goal internalization was organized by employment category: administrator (M = 15.53, SD = 3.67), faculty (M = 14.62, SD = 3.38), professional (M = 15.63, SD = 1.88), and career service (M = 15.23, SD = 3.53) (See Table 4-6). In this set of scores, only the mean of faculty scores was slightly lower than the other three employment groups. Once again, professional employees produced scores with a narrower standard deviation of 1.88 as compared to the other groups.

Summary of Descriptive Statistics

First it was apparent that there was very little difference between the total Empowerment means for LCP participants and non-participants. There were larger differences between various categories of employment. The mean for the administrators was higher than for either career service employees or faculty. But for both the professional and career service employees, the mean scores were lower for participants than non-participants. Lower means were evident for both Perceived Control and Goal Internalization, which suggests that there might be some interdependence between these two issues.

Considering the limited variance in the data, it was interesting to note that respondents tended to endorse high scores relative to competence in job performance across all categories of employment. While it may be desirable for a community college to employ a staff that has such a universally high degree of psychological empowerment, it may be that the skewness reflects other features of the psychological environment of

the institution. In general, across all conditions, the professional employees scores were the most homogeneous with the smallest standard deviations. Similarly, the employees who did not participate in the LCP had narrower standard deviations in all categories of empowerment scores except goal internalization.

Statistics Used for Analysis

Two sets of calculations were used to test the hypotheses of this study. The first hypothesis tested was related to the effect of participation in the Leadership Cultivation Program. MANOVA was the statistic chosen to test Hypothesis A: Psychological empowerment of employees was greater for participants of the LCP than for non-participants. The independent variable used in this calculation was participation in the LCP, which had two levels: participation and non-participation. The dependent variable for this calculation was the score on the Empowerment Scale for each of the four components of the survey: perceived control, perceived competence, goal internalization, and empowerment. MANOVA was also used to test Hypothesis B: There was a difference in the psychological empowerment of employees for different categories of employees.

There was a small difference in the group sizes for which SPSS adjusted automatically; therefore this had minimal impact on statistical power. All variables were negatively skewed and did not lend themselves favorably toward square root or log transformations. However, the analyses were conducted using the original variables because Stevens (2002) stated “that skewness has only a slight effect on level of significance or power.” (p. 261) Levene’s test for equality of error variances was conducted to determine if the data met the assumption of equal group variances. The

SPSS output for Levene's test was not significant, therefore equal variances are assumed.

All other multivariate assumptions were met.

Results

The preliminary use of MANOVA permitted multiple comparisons between the two groups to determine if LCP participation produced a significant difference in psychological empowerment, perceived control, perceived competence, or goal internalization. A MANOVA conducted on empowerment, perceived control, perceived competence, and goal internalization by Leadership Cultivation Program (LCP) was statistically significant, $F(4, 134) = 4.18, p < .01$, ($\eta^2 = 0.11$, power = 0.91) (Table 4-7).

Table 4-7 MANOVA on LCP by Perceived Control, Perceived Competence, Goal Internalization, and Empowerment

	Wilks' Lambda	F	df	Sig.
LCP	0.89	4.18*	4, 134	.001

Post Hoc ANOVAs were conducted in order to identify which values had the most to do with the relationship between participation in the LCP and psychological empowerment and its subcomponents (See Table 4-8).

Table 4-8 ANOVAs on LCP by Perceived Control, Perceived Competence, Goal Internalization, and Empowerment

Source	Dependent Variable	SS	df	MS	F	Sig.
LCP	Perceived Control	0.67	1	0.67	0.04	0.83
	Perceived Competence	20.57	1	20.57	3.80*	0.05
	Goal Internalization	51.89	1	51.89	4.95*	0.03
	Empowerment	18.37	1	18.37	0.33	0.57
Error	Perceived Control	2065.68	137	15.08		
	Perceived Competence	742.38	137	5.42		
	Goal Internalization	1435.94	137	10.48		
	Empowerment	7634.78	137	55.73		
Total	Perceived Control	2066.35	138			
	Perceived Competence	762.95	138			
	Goal Internalization	1487.83	138			
	Empowerment	7653.15	138			

Table 4-8 shows that there was no difference between LCP participants and non-participants in the summative scale of empowerment or the subscale of perceived control. However, there was a significant difference between the two groups for the subscales of perceived competence and goal internalization.

Table 4-9 shows the ANOVAs, where perceived goal internalization and perceived competence differed by LCP participation. The ANOVA for LCP participation resulted in an F score of 4.95 for goal internalization that was significant at the 0.03 level. LCP participants had higher goal internalization than non-participants (Table 4-9). Also, the ANOVA for perceived competence produced an F score of 3.80 that was significant at the 0.05 level (Table 4-9). LCP participants had lower perceived competence scores than non-participants.

Table 4-9: ANOVAs on Empowerment Scores by Leadership Cultivation Program Participation

	F	Sig.	Eta	Power
Perceived Control	0.04	0.83	0.00	0.06
Error	(15.08)			
Perceived Competence	3.80*	0.05	0.03	0.49
Error	(5.42)			
Goal Internalization	4.95*	0.03	0.04	0.60
Error	(10.48)			
Empowerment	0.33	0.57	0.00	0.09
Error	(55.73)			

Note. $df = 1, 137$. Parentheses represent mean square errors.

Next a MANOVA was conducted on empowerment, perceived control, perceived competence, and goal internalization by employee category (administrators, faculty, professional staff, and career service staff). The result of this analysis was not statistically significant, $F(4, 132) = 1.60, ns$, ($\eta = 0.04$, power = 0.83) (See Table 4-10). There was

no significant difference in perceived control, perceived competence, goal internalization or empowerment based on employment category (See Table 4-10)

Table 4-10: MANOVA on Employment Category by Perceived Control, Perceived Competence, Goal Internalization, and Empowerment

	Wilks' Lambda	F	df	Sig.
Employment Category	0.09	1.60	4, 132	0.09

Post hoc ANOVAs were calculated to determine the values for each individual dependent variable: perceived control, perceived competence, goal internalization, and empowerment. Table 4-11 shows results for the ANOVAs based on employment category. The ANOVA for employment category resulted in an *F* score of 4.65 for perceived control that was significant at the 0.01 level (See Table 4-11).

Table 4-11: ANOVAs on Employment Category by Perceived Control, Perceived Competence, Goal Internalization , and Empowerment

Source	Dependent Variable	SS	df	MS	F	Sig.
Employment Category	Perceived Control	193.39	3	64.46	4.65*	0.01
	Perceived Competence	4.96	3	1.66	0.30	0.83
	Goal Internalization	25.91	3	8.64	0.80	0.50
	Empowerment	354.66	3	118.22	2.19	0.09
Error	Perceived Control	1872.96	135	13.87		
	Perceived Competence	757.99	135	5.62		
	Goal Internalization	1461.92	135	10.83		
	Empowerment	7298.49	135	54.06		
Total	Perceived Control	2066.35	138			
	Perceived Competence	762.95	138			
	Goal Internalization	1487.83	138			
	Empowerment	7653.15	138			

Both administrators and professionals scored higher on perceived control than either faculty or career service.

Table 4-12 shows the results of all of the ANOVAs. Perceived competence, goal internalization, and empowerment produced non-significant results. Perceived control was significant based on employment category.

Table 4-12: ANOVAs on Empowerment Scores by Employee Category

	F	Sig.	Eta	Power
Perceived Control	4.65*	0.01	0.09	0.89
Error	(13.87)			
Perceived Competence	0.30	0.83	0.01	0.11
Error	(5.62)			
Goal Internalization	0.80	0.50	0.02	0.22
Error	(10.83)			
Empowerment	2.19	0.09	0.05	0.55
Error	(54.06)			

Note. $df = 3,135$. Parentheses represent mean square errors.

Discussion

There were 37 invited candidates for the study who did not respond to the Empowerment Scale; 13 (35.1%) had participated in the LCP, and 24 (64.9%) did not. While a solid rate of response from LCP participants would appear to have provided a rich source of data for this study, the disproportionate number of non-participants who failed to respond may have minimized the distinctiveness of these two groups. The higher rate of response among LCP participants, along with significance in the goal internalization scale suggests that participation in the LCP may have had a positive influence on willingness to participate in this study.

All of the late respondents, both LCP participants and non-participants, who were reminded via personal letter to complete the Empowerment Scale, submitted their responses by hard copy rather than online. This permitted respondents to submit data anonymously, disclosing only employment category and LCP participation. Anonymity rather than self-disclosure may also have played a significant role for increasing the comfort of non-participating employees to participate in the self-disclosure solicited by the Empowerment Survey. Only 21.5% of the LCP participants submitted data anonymously, as compared to 41.7% of the non-participants. This may be an indicator of

something, such as interpersonal trust, that was not the direct aim of this component of the study, but which was examined by means of qualitative data analysis.

Lower means were evident for both perceived control and goal internalization, which suggested the possibility of some interdependence between these two issues. Perhaps as employees experience a lower sense of control over important issues in the work setting, the internalization of organizational goals is negatively impacted. Once again, qualitative analysis addressed this dynamic.

Overall, the Leadership Cultivation Program did not produce a significant effect on the participants in psychological empowerment as measured by the total score of the Empowerment Scale. Also, employee category did not show any significant interaction with perceived control, perceived competence, goal internalization, or empowerment. However, results indicated significant effects in three specific subcomponents of the Empowerment Scale: perceived competence of non-LCP participants, LCP participants and goal internalization, and perceived control related to employee category.

First, non-participants in the LCP had higher perceived competence scores than did participants. This might be explained by the professional development challenges associated with cultivation of leadership skills. As participants in the LCP engaged in learning new skills with the potential for new opportunities, the reduction in a sense of competence might suggest that this new learning served at least in part to challenge the status quo and therefore the comfortable sense of competence of participants in order to stretch capacities in new ways. It might also be related to the frustrating incongruence of participating as an equal partner in the LCP, while occupying a position of lower status in daily work-life.

Second, participants in the LCP had higher sense of goal internalization than non-participants. This indicated that the fundamental plan of the architect of the LCP, who expressed a desire for all participants to commit to the common goal of fostering the best institution possible, had harnessed some of the energy and commitment of the LCP participants toward that end.

Finally, perceived control differed by employee category, with administrators and professional scoring higher than faculty and career service. While the ways in which career service and faculty may be similar in terms of perceived control are not immediately evident, it is relatively clear that administrators, as managers of the institution, tend to have the position power or status that permits them to exercise control over institutional matters. Professionals tend to occupy unique roles, such as computer programmer or coach, in which the work is conducted with a relatively high level of autonomy.

Summary

For this chapter, quantitative data from the employee Empowerment Scale (Menon, 2001) has been collected and analyzed to answer the research question: Are there differences in the measure of employee empowerment between community college employees who have engaged in a yearlong leadership development program and those who have not? Results indicate that the LCP did not produce a significant effect on the participants in psychological empowerment, but there were three specific areas which produced results that were statistically significant: Non-participants had higher competence scores than participants, participants had higher goal internalization than non-participants, and administrators and professional had higher perceived control scores than faculty and career service.

In Chapter 5, the results of qualitative data collection and analysis are examined to answer the following two questions: What are the beliefs and experiences that contribute to or explain psychological empowerment for different groups of community college employees? What behaviors are most closely associated with the cognitive state of empowerment in the community college workplace? Hatch's typology analysis was used to explore the qualitative data.

CHAPTER 5
QUALITATIVE DATA ANALYSIS

In this chapter the qualitative interview data will be explored to clarify two research questions: What are the experiences and beliefs that contribute to or explain psychological empowerment for different groups of community college employees? What behaviors are most closely associated with the cognitive state of empowerment in the community college workplace?

Eighteen people from different levels within the college were interviewed for this study. In order to guide the reader through the maze of identities, the following table of pseudonyms of participants has been provided.

Table 5-1: Maximum Variation Sampling Table with Respondent Pseudonyms

Faculty	Administrator	Professional	Career Service
LCP Participant High Score <i>Buttruss</i>	LCP Participant High Score <i>Jean and Sam</i>	LCP Participant High Score <i>Stephano</i>	LCP Participant High Score <i>Beau</i>
LCP Participant Low Score <i>Yvette</i>	LCP Participant Low Score <i>TC</i>	LCP Participant Low Score <i>Wolf</i>	LCP Participant Low Score <i>Adrienne</i>
Nonparticipant High Score <i>Wendy</i>	Nonparticipant High Score <i>Ashley</i>	Nonparticipant High Score <i>Mary</i>	Nonparticipant High Score <i>Samantha</i>
Nonparticipant Low Score <i>Georgia and Jane</i>	Nonparticipant Low Score <i>Fred</i>	Nonparticipant Low Score <i>Bucky</i>	Nonparticipant Low Score <i>Hope</i>

Experiences of life in this community college were not captured in the raw original form, but rather were reflected in the memories of events in the words of respondents as they answered the interview questions. These memories intertwined in complex strands of thought over multiple occurrences of events, colored by emotions in kaleidoscopic

forms, punctuated with distilled summaries recorded as beliefs. It was difficult at times to separate one from the other as beliefs tended to influence subsequent perceptions of experiences, which in turn affected behaviors. Behaviors often appeared to be mediated by emotional responses of employees. Since it was apparent that the meaning of the data regarding behavior would not be adequately explored without the complement of emotions, this portion of the analysis will incorporate emotional responses as a distinctive part of the behavioral repertoire. The categories selected for inclusion in this chapter present a window into the dynamics of psychological empowerment in the workplace of this community college.

The initial wave of typological analysis began with the categories borrowed from Menon's Empowerment Survey (2001): perceived control, perceived competence, and goal internalization. However, the final categories that resulted from this analysis were the ones that best explained the dynamic process of psychological empowerment. Perceived competence did not emerge as a fixed psychological attribute, but instead exhibited a variety of modulations that seemed to change in response to environmental contingencies. The experience of competence might have been different at different times for different people due to changes in their situations and the particular contingencies they faced. For example, Hope, a career service employee who was not an LCP participant, was in a situation when she first began to work at the college in which she perceived that she was competent.

When I first started here at the college, I had a very positive management crew that encouraged me to complete my education, to look further into advancements here at the college. I was really excited about working here. I would even come on my off days to put into work. Anything they wanted me to do, I volunteered for it.

She received positive support and encouragement to pursue advancement. As the result, she was emotionally positive about her work and fully engaged in whatever activities her management crew suggested. However, her sense of competence changed when the management changed. In this example, competence was situationally bound and not an attribute of her psychological make-up. Rather, the key attribute of her ability to regain her lost sense of competence was found in her ability to learn how to adapt to this change. Therefore, for this study, the category of *Learning* will be as a major experiential component of psychological empowerment.

Similarly, perceived control was a very broad concept that was subject to a host of environmental contingencies. As Beau put it:

I think control over your life and your work and your situations is mostly an illusion. We're all answering to somebody who's answering to somebody else and on up the line. And, there's only one control factor that's dependable and that's God. The rest of it is gonna fluctuate and the best thing to do is be flexible, roll with it and know, going in, where your personal lines are.

Adjustments were made daily in response to changes in the environment over which there is limited control. The key element that emerged in the data that seemed most consonant with the psychological power to adapt to these changes was *Decision-making*, which will be the second category within the analysis of experiences and beliefs.

Finally, the construct of goal internalization relied on the understanding that goals were a somewhat fixed organizational attribute that is somehow assimilated into the life of the employees. However, the dynamic of alignment with organizational goals, particularly in times of flux, seemed to be mutable by the fundamental relational attribute of trusting. Employees may have known the organizational goals, thus cognitively internalizing them, yet they operated in a manner that was not aligned due to a variety of factors that tended to reflect the degree to which they were willing to trust. *Trusting* will

be the third category within experiences and beliefs. The chapter will conclude with the analysis of behavior and emotions, which consists of a single domain: fleshing out the organizational message.

The work of the organization was carried out in the behaviors of the people who did what was called for by the needs of the constituents of the college. Sam, an administrator of the college and architect of the LCP, described the fundamental organizational purpose: “We educate students, which is our product.” His desire, which reflected the desire of the executive leadership team was that “everyone's goals are committed to doing that.” In a perfectly functioning version of this organization, every action of every employee would be engaged toward the prime directive, which would involve doing whatever is necessary to educate students. And Sam took it one step farther to include more than just the pragmatic aspect of goal directed behavior. He added that “they are positive about it” which incorporated the emotional and attitudinal dimension of employee behaviors. He concluded with the desired intention of “helping everyone to want that common goal of being the best institution possible.” As this message was fleshed out by the daily activities of the employees throughout the organization, the focus of this analysis will be on the processes associated with psychological empowerment.

As an observer in this work environment, an effort was made to attend to my biases as they emerged, and to look behind them to see if my perceptions might hinder clear representation of the data. As I worked with this material, I continued to observe the setting, hoping to clarify and refine my understanding of the complex interpersonal context of this community college. Any references within the data that may have provided unique or identifying information regarding an individual or the institution was

modified or replaced with a pseudonym. Every effort has been made to preserve the original meaning in the process of modification.

Throughout the balance of this analysis the patterns that emerged from the words of respondents that most clearly articulated the dynamic of psychological empowerment will be highlighted. As in the visual style of chiaroscuro, in which objects begin to emerge from the shadows through contrasts between the object and the background, so too in this study, the psychological experience of empowerment emerged through the struggles of employees as they developed a deeper awareness of personal capabilities through challenges encountered in the background of the organization. Adaptation, the process of making changes in response to environmental conditions, is a normal part of life, as is homeostasis, the struggle to preserve equilibrium in resistance to environmental changes. As the experiences of this group of employees are explored in the first section of this study, it is my hope that the construct of psychological empowerment will stand out from the background as a prominent feature of psychologically healthy and productive work-life as individuals work through the dual tensions of adapting to change while preserving homeostasis.

Experiences and Beliefs: Substrate of Psychological Empowerment

Relationship Between Experiences and Beliefs.

Experiences unfolded through the interlocking processes of interaction and communication in the workplace. In the process of consolidating beliefs from the vast body of experiences, there was a complex interplay among memories, thoughts, and emotions. Memories provided knowledge of the patterns of previous experiences that were used to shape beliefs and behaviors in the past into schema or mental models.

Thoughts involved reflection and interpretation of the features of current experiences, in

order to identify the important attributes that commanded attention in current experience. “Emotions express the intimate personal meaning of what is happening in our social lives and combine motivational, cognitive, adaptational, and physiological processes into a single complex state that involves several levels of analysis.” (Lazarus, 1991, p.6) As each individual reflected on and appraised the various attributes of experiences in the workplace in the light of past experiences, schema involving patterns of beliefs that endured the test of time emerged to serve as useful guides of future behavior. In this section I will examine the sources of influence in the development and evolution of complex beliefs that in turn guide behavior related to psychological empowerment in employees of this community college.

Interaction: Mediator of organizational experience.

Individuals may work in relative isolation or complete tasks in solitude, but the community college is a highly social organization, so these activities take on significance by the meaning given through interaction. Experiences described by the respondents consistently involved interaction with others due to the social nature of the work environment. Whether the experiences in the workplace involved peers, or constituents whose needs were being served, or interactions with supervisors or administrators, other people were usually present in the stories related in the interviews. The importance of interaction is clarified by Beau, who described his initial experience in the institution as a frontline career service employee.

When I first started the nature of my job was off-campus, out in the world -- when I would show up on campus it was like the people I worked for were like, ‘Oh, we’re gonna have to find something for him to do’. And I felt like I should just stay out there and not come back.

The way that Beau experienced his initial work assignment was that he was not really part of the institution because his work took place away from the campus. Even the people he worked for seemed to be unsure of what he needed to do to fulfill his role. His interactions were unsettling due to the high level of ambiguity of his role. He then went on to say, “once I became visible I received a lot more support.” By indicating that he “became visible,” he communicated the perception that he was previously invisible to the members of the college, which was characterized by an absence of meaningful interaction.

Yeah, I mean, everybody needs feedback. There wasn't any. I mean I would pretty much work out of the trunk of my car the first two years I worked for the college, and I would see my immediate supervisor once a week, if that. So there was never any feedback, and none of the people I was directly involved with were in my chain of command. So, I was just out there. I never really understood what was expected. I kept thinking that there oughta be more to it than this. It was uncomfortable in that there was no one to ask and there was no one telling, you know. It was like just “Go do it,” so I did.

The absence of interaction created a vacuum of understanding in his relationship with the college. This left him with a feeling of discomfort due to the uncertainty in his role. “I didn't really lack confidence in myself but confidence in the job.” Beau had come to work at the college with a history of being a high performer in his previous vocation, so his self-confidence started at a relatively high level, but within the organization, there was a void of meaningful interaction to anchor him securely within the institution.

But like I said, once I became working at a campus, being more visible, it was like “Oh, that's who you are,” and suddenly there was a lot of support and that helped a lot because then there was some positive feedback about what I was doing.

Here Beau underscored the essential value of interaction among members of the organization for establishing the foundation of psychological empowerment. The discomfort he felt at the absence of meaningful feedback was the result of his lost sense

of his place and purpose in the larger system. He had no readily available yardstick to gauge his effectiveness other than his own inner values and standards which he brought from another very different way of life. He knew who he was and had confidence in who he was and in his ability to perform a job competently. But he didn't know how who he was fit within the institution until he became visible to others, who were then able to interact with him, providing support and positive feedback. His power to affect the organization became apparent only after he became a visible member of the community. Psychological empowerment did not unfold in isolation, but through complex patterns of interaction. The critical importance of interaction was underscored by another respondent, TC, an administrator who participated in the LCP.

You can't operate in a vacuum. What I do here, what's done over there, what's done over there, affects my job. Interaction is critical. Any kind of interaction, even if it's adversarial, because then you know there's an issue, and it's gotta be resolved.

As both men indicated, the work of the college could not unfold in isolation, because all of the employees were essentially united by membership in a common organizational bond. TC described the mechanism by which interaction defined his role. As a complex system, activity in one part of the college affected the rest. Only through interaction could all members of the organization understand how their actions fit within the functioning of the whole, and adapt to changes in the system. When he said that even adversarial interactions were welcome, he didn't indicate that the process of interaction required a passive capitulation to conflict, but rather it was something that required an active engagement in order to bring conflict to resolution.

Now as far as control over my work, I control my work to a certain extent. Interactions don't really control my work. They become part of my work. They become part of the information gathering process of my job, which then is incorporated into changes that I need to make with regard to how we do things.

While TC indicated that he didn't give up his personal control over the actual work that he performed due to interactions, he incorporated the information gathered through interaction into changes that he needed to make through a process of reciprocal interplay. He actively chose to make personal changes as the result of interaction, which would in turn affect how "we do things." This is a core process in organizational learning.

Communication: Channel for shaping meaning.

Every one who participated in this study was a full member of the institution who shared in the identity of this community college. Each one had a unique sense of his or her place within the institution and his or her part to play in fulfilling the mission of the college. Yet each one was a separate individual connected in this collective identity by means of the slender thread of communication. The forms of communication manifested in a variety of ways: formal meetings and gatherings, informal encounters on the elevator, telephone conversations, email, verbal and nonverbal messages, evaluations and feedback. All served to engage the individual in a web of connections with the larger system that informed the purpose, place and value of the individual in fulfilling the mission of the whole.

The communication of these 18 employees, who consented to talk about their work for this study, was a matrix from which the knowledge of the dynamics of psychological empowerment was extracted. Each respondent reflected on and communicated stories of experiences doing various jobs in the college, connecting with others in the institution, and participating in the larger system of the organization. These stories were distilled to provide a clearer conceptualization of the dynamics of the construct of psychological empowerment as it unfolded in this particular setting.

Tools for constructing meaning

As demonstrated by the experience of Beau, people in this setting did not behave in a vacuum, but rather behavior in the workplace was an outgrowth of activity that preceded and informed the behavior, and interacted to shape the behavior. Next the process of refining raw experiences will be examined, from initial focus of attention on a particular facet of the experience through the development of schema, or mental models, which in turn informed the behavioral patterns of these people in the workplace.

Perception. There were patterns in the process of constructing meaning from the perceptions of experiences accumulated over time in the workplace. Employees who were interviewed in this study communicated their perceptions of experiences very easily and directly. They recalled events, interactions, and activities in which they were involved. Then they communicated something more. They articulated their interpretation of the various experiences they had, and through the interplay of thoughts, emotions, and memories, expressed how their beliefs had developed over time. Beliefs appeared to stand apart from experiences like gems compressed from raw ore. From this process of distillation of the ore of experiences into succinct statements of beliefs, learning took place, which formed the nucleus for future actions. For example, Jean described her experience of forming a professional network.

Another thing that I think this college has encouraged and allowed me to do is to get involved with organizations and groups outside of the college, where I can interact with colleagues from across the county, from throughout the state, and I'm very involved in our state-wide organization for people in my field, and the international organization.

She believed that she was encouraged to get involved with colleagues outside the institution, and so she did it. That belief was validated by the consequence that she was actually "allowed" as well as encouraged. No one hindered her in this activity along the

way. As this respondent anticipated and prepared for the future, the plans that she articulated drew on her prior experiences and the beliefs that she had retained which seemed to provide the greatest promise for successful adaptation on the journey forward.

If I have a real challenge and I don't know what to do with it, you know, with regard to my work, I can pick up the phone and call any one of half a dozen people that are much more expert than I am in the field.

As the result of this pattern of experience in the college her mental model of how to solve problems was not limited to what she knew. She was confident that if she encountered a problem beyond her level of expertise, she would be supported by a broad network of experts who were ready to respond to her call with the knowledge that she lacked. Her personal power did not come from a requirement that she needed to know everything, but that she had learning resources available to draw from in the future.

Attention. The focus of attention restricts an individual's awareness to the specific features of the environment that are most important for a particular individual to address at a particular time in a particular situation. The focus of attention informs the perception of an individual regarding phenomena as they are experienced. For example, in her opening statement, Adrienne described her experience related to her sense of confidence in her work.

Presently, with what's going on where I work I don't feel very confident because they're –they're scrutinizing everything we do, and they're putting little yellow stickies on everything that has mistakes, and they bring it back and we have to fix it.

“They” were in authority over her, and they were “scrutinizing” her. The result was that her mistakes were the focus of attention. As the result she had to make changes in the work that she did. The use of the term “we” indicated that she was not alone in this experience, but was part of a group that shared this experience. The result was that she

did not feel confident in her work, because “they” apparently continued to find mistakes in what she did. Her next statement reflected her interpretation of the interaction. “So it makes you start doubting everything that you’re doing, plus you feel like you’re in grade school.” Her confidence was attached to the way in which others perceived her, and in this experience she drew on the memory of being a child in grade school. When she made that connection, she felt devalued by her supervisor, as if she regressed because she was treated like a small child who had done something wrong.

By contrast, when she had the opportunity to be involved in the leadership program, the mere fact that she was invited to participate was perceived as an emotionally positive experience.

I really enjoyed being a part of that leadership program. It made me feel like I was important enough to go to those meetings and to be a part of it, and you know, see what they were trying to accomplish. I felt good about that.

She interpreted her experience through the emotion of enjoyment. She perceived that she was important because she was included as part of an important initiative of the college. Adrienne’s attention in both of these experiences was pulled to specific attributes of the interaction. Her choice of the word “scrutinize” in the first experience communicated a way of seeing that implied a hostile judgment. She perceived the negative intent of those who were examining her work, and it became the focus of her attention. By contrast, in the second experience, her attention focused on the benign quality of the LCP, and on seeing “what they were trying to accomplish,” in which she was allowed participate. By implication, she was an important person in the college. The focus of her attention shaped her experience in each of these situations.

Memory. Memory is the third component of fleshing out the organizational message. Studies regarding the structure of memory suggest that it is a complex

phenomenon with multiple distinct dimensions (Goodwin & Talwar, 1989). First and most obviously, declarative memory involves direct knowledge of an event. This is the form of memory most commonly used in ordinary conversations about events. The remembered events are discussed and from this, the meaning of events is interpreted (Herder & Redner, 1991; Tsai & Wagner, 1978; Brown, 2002). Adrienne's emotions signaled that there was a gap between what she was trying to accomplish and her current reality. The negative emotion of fear was contrasted with her belief that her pure motives were aligned with the larger purpose of the college. For example, when Adrienne recalled a recent event she said,

Again in our department we're not allowed to make decisions. And when you do make decision, you are yelled at for making a decision. There's no independent thinking. Period. We made one yesterday. We had a situation, and the person did the best she could based on what she was given, and collaborated with a few people and decided just to--and she tried to reach her boss and other people and couldn't get a hold of anybody--so she just decided just to go ahead and let this person do what they needed to do.

The belief of "we're not allowed to make decisions" was sustained by the memory of experiences in which decision-making was punished. Although she was not the central actor in this story, she learned from her peer's experience in which she participated as one of the supporters on the side. "We had a situation" referred to the experience of a unique problem not covered in the typical rules and procedures of the department. The use of the term "we" indicated that she viewed herself as a participant in this other person's decision. The woman in the story didn't act as a completely autonomous decision-maker, but collaborated with those who were around her. When she was unable to interact with her immediate supervisor, she exercised judgment and acted according to the best information available. Adrienne's memory of the outcome of this exercise of

autonomous decision-making was that the person was punished. She continued the story with her conclusion:

Well, the boss called later that night and got all angry and said, “Well, you know, what made her think she could make that decision on her own?” Well, she did what she had to do at the time and it--You know, one level of management said “Yes, this is the way it was done,” and another department said, “No.” So she was kind of caught in the middle, and she just decided just to go ahead and let the student do what they needed to do.

By implication, she did not have the right to make a decision in this case. The memory of the emotion of anger suggested that the supervisor considered the autonomous action as something to be prevented. The conclusion of her story was the meaning that she extrapolated from discussion of the event: “We can’t make decisions.” The memory of the event and the meaning extracted through discussion were two different things. Her belief was reinforced by her experience of being yelled at for making a decision: “They are not allowed to independently think and make decisions.” She learned from the situation, which resulted in a consolidation of experiences from memory into a single coherent belief that explained the situation.

Affective memory is characterized by the persistence of feelings that are suggestive of past experiences, even when there may be no cognitive awareness of the event (Ganzarin & Buchele, 1987; Goodwin & Talwar, 1989; Tsai & Wagner, 1978). Hope described her experience in these words: “I’ve had some pretty rough times with certain people in certain areas, and it made me to become a very negative person.” Her affective experience carried over from the contacts with her supervisor into total experience of herself. “I was so stressed out with different things that were going on.” The level of affective distress was not confined to the specific contacts with her supervisor, but actively influenced her life even apart from work.

Your management, the people that you have to report to, can really, really, really cause an effect on how you are. You know, and I think that a lot of times, people say, well, you know, you bring issues from home into work and that causes a problem with you at work. Well, this is vice versa.

A basic characteristic of healthy memory is that it is both retrievable and suppressible. As new material enters the perceptual and cognitive system, the interpretation of reality is altered to accommodate new incoming information (Klatzky, 1984). Varying sources of information, differing role expectations, and varying spheres of influence affect the interpretation of events so that the “reality” of the original events may be difficult to capture. Over time and multiple conversations, original knowledge of an event becomes unavailable due to distortion. Hope struggled with the emotional experience with assistance from other people who helped her to find a way to reframe and resolve her distress in order to cope more effectively. As a result, the experience of support modified her negative affect and enhanced her options for coping with the situation, and she maintained her job. “If I would have dealt with it without having someone to kind of gear me, or help me through the process, I don’t think I’d have a job today.”

Emotional valence. The effect of emotion generated by experiences and beliefs on behaviors of respondents varied significantly depending on several factors, including the intensity of the emotion, the resonance with other sources of input, and most significantly the positive or negative valence of the emotion. This section will be used to explore the effect of emotional valence on psychological empowerment.

Throughout the interview with Adrienne there was a thread of her concern over the changes in her area of the college. Her concern was not to resist change, but to provide

feedback within the institution, but there was no mechanism to provide feedback, and feedback was actively discouraged by her supervisor.

It's like people are afraid of – fear of reprisal. You know, no one wants to say what's wrong and try to fix it. If you do, you're complaining. In fact we were told, 'If you don't like the job then leave.' If people don't like the changes and what's going on they can leave! How does that make you feel?

The intense emotional experience of fear limited her ability to provide corrective feedback into the system. Her experiences taught her to believe that her feedback was labeled “complaining” which she perceived was offensive to her manager. The ultimate threat in the environment, loss of employment, might be the consequence of providing feedback that was not desired. The threat to her livelihood interacted with the feeling that she was being treated like she was in grade school, to produce an emotional reaction of frustration. This was not congruent with the way she perceived herself.

There was evidence from other sources of input in the institution that challenged and contradicted this perception. When she said, “the fact that they offered the leadership program made me feel like they valued my being important,” she showed that she perceived that both sources of input were part of the same larger institution. On one hand she was a valued and important member. On the other hand she was expendable.

But again, like I said the comment they made about if you don't like what you're doing then you can leave made me feel like, you know, we're very replaceable, you know. It didn't make me feel good about my job. And I know that change is difficult for people, but change has never bothered me. But this is a whole new experience for me over there. It's been a learning one.

She struggled to synthesize the two differently valenced sources of input, and reconciled them with a novel insight. “This is a whole new experience for me...” It did not feel good, but she had confidence that she would learn. Her memory of past

experiences of change reinforced her belief that she was adaptable because change never bothered her.

Learning: Developer of Competence

Learning is a critical organizational capacity, particularly in times of rapid environmental flux. The organizational capacity to learn is composed of the aggregated ability of each of the members. Four major components of learning were represented in the interview data. First, several respondents described the experience of initially becoming a part of the organization, and the challenges associated with learning a new job within an unfamiliar system. Successful mastery of this phase of learning consisted of three distinct elements: establishing a positive sense of self, developing a network of relationships, and discovering how to acquire information within the system. The second essential element of learning was responding to feedback. Continuous feedback from the college was provided in different ways, both formal and informal, and for different purposes, supportive and corrective. The capacity to learn from feedback was a critical element of psychological empowerment. Third, professional development activities provided a means for intentionally developing a wide range of competencies over time. Beyond this category of learning, the special case of the LCP was examined as a college-sponsored professional development activity.

Adapting to a new system

The process of gaining entrance into a new job in a new organization is one imbued with ambiguity and risk. In this study it became clear that the experience of adapting to a new job in a new institution with a sense of competence was by no means a passive process, but one which required a great deal of psychological effort in order to make course adjustments. Strategies varied, but the consistent theme across all of the stories of

adapting to the college involved the first step of establishing a positive sense of self as a competent employee in the new workplace. Clarity of role definition contributed to the ease with which an individual was able to acclimate confidently to a new position or operate competently within a position. Consider the story of Bucky, a professional employee who did not participate in the LCP.

I worked for 26 years for a manufacturing firm. They were sold and I was let go. As you can imagine, that's a real blow to your ego. I worked a short while for another firm, and they basically told me I was stupid and I know I wasn't. So I left them and came here.

External forces of change resulted in his termination from a stable employment situation after 26 years, resulting in a personal crisis that he described as a blow to his ego. He was challenged first to find a new job, and when he moved into the new environment he met with a negative appraisal of his worth as an employee. "They basically told me I was stupid." After 26 years to have his world and his sense of self challenged in such a negative way produced a psychological imbalance in his ability to adapt to the new employment situation. This appraisal was so threatening psychologically that he had to leave the environment in order to preserve his sense of self-worth. But his self-appraisal was involved in the decision as to how to respond to the negative appraisal of his ability. "...and I know I wasn't." He was able to preserve his belief in his competence in sharp relief to the devaluation of his new employer, but he could not adapt to the new environment, so he left and transitioned to the college.

Bucky encountered a different orientation in the college work environment. "They don't stand over your shoulder. They assume that, you know, you're capable of doing it. They're very open to questions. I get a lot of support from the superiors." Rather than the feedback that he was stupid, he encountered the assumption that he was capable. This

satisfied his need to be perceived as competent. In this context, his questions were accepted as a normal part of the adaptation process, and not a sign of stupidity. He could take the risk of asking questions, revealing a lack of knowledge, and still get a lot of support from his “superiors.” This led to an important point. Bucky consistently used the term “superiors.” This term suggested that Bucky placed himself psychologically in a subservient and dependent position in which his well-being depended on satisfying those who were “superiors.” His perception of competence was largely derived from his acquiescence to subservience as a strategy for negotiating positive feedback.

In contrast, TC, a new administrator who participated in the LCP, who worked in the same department as Bucky, chose a very different strategy to adapt to the leadership in the college. “When I first walked in the doors here, I challenged my supervisor. And at first, relative to that, my confidence was thrown on the ground.” Rather than adapt to the status quo in submission to the leaders in a new environment, TC challenged his supervisor. The perception of his competence derived from his previous knowledge and skill in doing the job he was hired to do. Even so, the feedback he received caused his confidence to be “thrown on the ground.”

Y’all told me I was out of place. And being here for two weeks, how could I make a judgment call that fast in only two weeks of being in a place when I wasn’t even totally acclimated to the system?

To be “out of place” was to receive negative evaluation of his power to participate in the place. He was not sufficiently acculturated in two weeks to have earned the respect and trust of the established leader.

But TC did not accept the negative appraisal of his competence as valid. Although his confidence in his competence was challenged, he persisted in his judgment that the status quo needed to be challenged. The result was a prolonged experience of distress,

characterized by anger toward his supervisor, as his emotions associated with the threat of challenge were aroused in defense of his self-worth. "I'm like 'Wait a minute! This is really out of whack! You know, this is really out of whack'" His actions for the next year and a half revolved around finding a way to validate his judgment. He took his complaint to the state office.

They came in and saw the mistake that I had pointed out a year and a half before. Pointed it out to administration and said, "Look, this is wrong. It's been done wrong for the past 15 years." You know? And then finally, "Gee, he was right! He made a point and nobody paid attention to it."

The validation of his competence had come from someone external to the college with higher authority than those who would not listen to him. TC had triangulated his professional network and knowledge of the larger system in which the college operated to force the college to correct the errors of his supervisor. "There is a protocol you've gotta follow. It is a professional protocol. I don't care what industry you're in, you've gotta follow that protocol." When he was finally validated in his judgment, his personal sense of professional competence was restored, but at the cost of his alignment with the institution. "So, yeah, it was kinda difficult, you know. I adhere to professional ethics so I followed that and I stuck to it." He learned to successfully adapt to a culture in which his worth was challenged, but he had not learned how to work positively within the culture.

The relationship between the two organizational learning processes of gathering important information and developing a social network are so tightly tied together that in some cases it is difficult to separate the two. Wolf, a professional employee who participated in the LCP, described a lack of confidence in her work at the college. But her attribution of the cause of her self-doubt was based on a very different experience than either TC or Bucky. Wolf's memory of her early life in the college was explained as a

departure from her previous sense of confidence in her ability because she was new to the college context. The manner her work was done in the college was different than the same kind of work in the corporate setting she had known from her previous job. She made an active choice to join the LCP in order to cope with her internal struggle of self-worth, and the outcome was enhanced confidence. As Wolf put it, “My confidence level started out low when I first started, and that could be because of a new job and all that, but I think it took a long time for me to get out of that rut of not being confident in, in my surroundings.” One of the key elements that facilitated the learning process, and mobilized her sense of confidence was the opportunity within the LCP to seek out a mentoring relationship.

I’ve been with the college for going on two years and, and I came from a profit corporation prior to being here so it was a little, a lot--no, not a little, a lot of learning and relearning things in a non-profit world, but I did come in with a good sense of confidence in my type of work. When I started the LCP program, started just within six months of me starting, and I joined it ‘cause that’s the type of environment I was used to. And going through the mentoring process really helped me kind of overcome that.

Wolf clearly indicated that her lack of confidence was not in the type of work she was doing, but in learning the context in which the work was done. She chose to seek out a mentor to help her to learn the social environment of the college.

My mentor was the general manager...Jenny, and she is awesome. She took me under her wing and she had me attend a lot of the things, a lot of different meetings, like with her staff and I helped with the planning process--and so, I kind of felt like her personal assistant and that was really cool. It really helped to bring me back into perspective and helped me in my confidence. I can tell you that in the college it’s very personal as far as acquiring information. It’s not like you can find it right here and go to it any time you want, you have to approach somebody and so you kind of build relationships that way.

Although Wolf brought with her a sense of competence in the general kind of work that she did, this did not automatically translate into success in the new environment. She

had to learn the institutional culture from her mentor in order to re-gather her confidence in her ability to do the job that she had been hired to do. A critical piece of this process involved the competence needed to acquire information. That aspect of learning the organizational ropes required socialization into the network of relationships in order to be given access to important information. Her mentor, an established and powerful member of the community, gave her the entrée into the social connections that she needed to become competent socially and professionally in this specific context. The positive experience of being mentored in the new work environment helped Wolf to overcome the sense of disorientation.

Similarly, Stephano, a long-time professional employee and LCP participant, echoed Wolf's experience as he recalled the mentoring he received from his first supervisor. Just as Wolf described her active involvement in the culture by going to meetings, Stephano described how he was involved in a way that was uncharacteristic for his particular job.

My boss that I used to have, John Justice--my confidence came a lot from him because he involved me in every aspect. A lot of times you do one thing in your job and you do a lot of little things, but he involved me in everything.

Stephano learned how his particular job fit within the larger process through involvement, and he developed a strong sense of confidence in his expertise because he could see the value of his contribution to the overall project. He was also aware of the norms within the profession that made this an exceptional and powerful learning opportunity.

I mean I went to other meetings. That really helped me be confident about what I'm doing out there in the field, because I was involved in every aspect, because a lot of construction managers, like myself, they're not involved in all those pre-meetings. They're just kind of: "O.K. here's the--here's the project, and the outline, read through that and start your job working with the material. They don't get involved

with the planner. You know, so with the change of the guard, so to speak, I make it my duty to involve myself. So, now, somebody tells me to leave-- they don't want me there--then I'll back off. But my past boss, kind of his way of doing things was if you want to see somebody, you go see them. You don't wait. If you try and you'll make a phone call, and say "Can I come see you?" you know, they put you off, so I try not to get put off.

The practice he had developed from his mentor, John, was to be actively involved in every aspect of the development process. That meant participating in meetings where he was not always welcome to have input. But his mentor taught him the trick of making it his "duty to be involved." Even if people would rather not have him involved, he learned not to ask permission for access to important activities that ensured his competence in doing the tasks associated with his job. Instead, Stephano learned how to avoid being "put off" from accessing the knowledge that he needed, and developed the confidence to insert himself into situations that he perceived to be necessary. He was fully aware that he ran the risk of being asked to leave if he was not welcome, but he learned that it was easier to gain access to important events by not asking permission. Stephano was equipped to continue to grow in knowledge and skill over time.

In both of these cases, learning was facilitated by the mentoring relationship in which the employee was able to develop expertise in negotiating the social network of the college. Like Wolf and Stephano, Jane also enjoyed a mentor as she moved from a very different context into the culture of the community college. But for Jane, a faculty member who did not participate in the LCP, learning information from a mentor without developing a solid network of relationships produced a disconnect from the larger system. As the result, she knew a great deal, but was unable to use her knowledge productively to solve some of the ongoing problems she faced as part of long-term adaptation.

I worked under a department chair that was extremely instrumental in explaining the way things work at a community college, because I've worked in the university setting and the public setting before. My department chair just made sure I knew everything about curriculum development and DACUMs, going into the computer and setting up classes, how to operate the different computer programs that we have to set up classes or add seats to classes, things that were of a higher level of structure than just pulling a student's transcript, which is very simplistic. That chair also taught me a lot about the political structures of a community college-- everything from how associate systems work to how the statewide course numbering system works--the whole kit and caboodle. And I was very, very happy with that.

This initial experience of mentoring on entry into the community college facilitated the sense of competence by providing her with a satisfying knowledge base. Acquisition of the knowledge produced a positive emotional response, but Jane was not equipped for long-term adaptation by learning how to continue to work through a strong social network. "I think there's a definite relationship between the times that I feel real good about coming here to work, and some other times that I feel isolated and don't feel good about coming to work." The sense of isolation distanced her from the ongoing changes within the college to the point where she did not continue to acquire new information over time. "I quite frankly don't know how my department works today." The key element of this experience was that she internalized a negative sense of herself in the college from the sense of being disconnected.

The other side has been not so much a sense of a slap on the hand or you did something wrong--actually I'd rather have that--but more a sense of isolation and being ignored. Or being the poor kid out on the block.

She perceived the isolation to be a sign that she was being ignored. She took a passive role when she said that she felt that she was "being ignored," which was further interpreted as a belief that she was treated like "the poor kid out on the block." This negative belief about herself in relationship to others served to reinforce her disengagement, thus hindering further learning. The failure to establish a healthy network

of relationships compromised her ongoing learning and effective problem-solving within the college, a core attribute of psychological empowerment.

Responding to feedback

The concept of feedback is too large and far ranging to be fully developed here because of the integral nature of feedback for social adaptation. However, three key elements that are critical for understanding the role of feedback in psychological empowerment will be highlighted: encouragement, threat, and the void.

Encouragement. Encouragement as feedback provided a consistent thread throughout the data. Encouraging messages about an individual employee's worth can be transmitted through many different channels, as Beau described.

Every time I've been eligible for a raise, they've given it to me. I've gotten incentive increases from meeting goals. My evaluations are always excellent in all categories, and I was recently invited, I mean I didn't pursue the position that I am acting in now, I was invited to take it, and I feel that the people that asked me, thought I'd be good at it, so that was pretty encouraging.

The messages Beau received came to him primarily from material feedback from the leaders in the college. He received a very tangible form of feedback in the form of raises and incentive pay increases. He also indicated that he received very strong formal evaluations of his work, which resulted in a promotion. Georgia, a faculty member who did not participate in the LCP, added another component to the process of receiving validation through tangible, material support.

The department level's support for my artistic work went wonderful by renewing funding year after year after year. By paying attention to my work when I was mentioned in the newspaper. They saw the review of my show. That was good. You know, so they were happy with my work and happy enough to keep me funded year after year after year. So putting your money where your mouth is means a lot.

She was pleased to receive the funds necessary to produce artistic work over a period of years, but beyond material support, she also mentioned that they noticed the

positive feedback she received from the community. Recognition that she was positively engaged in the community beyond the college validated her worth in the expanded role as an ambassador of the college. This was particularly important to Georgia, as was the encouragement she received from the validation of her students. This represented a theme common to all of the faculty members interviewed. “I think that the students love me because they know I love them and, so we’re just very comfortable together.” This affirmation by the students seemed to provide a buffer for faculty when encouragement might be lacking in other areas. Yvette relied on the feedback from students to strengthen her sense of competence in the face of the harsher feedback she sustained from administration. “I’m very confident in myself. But my students give me feedback as to competency and say, ‘Wow, you’re doing a good job. You really helped me today. I really appreciate you helping me to help myself.’” She recently stepped down from a leadership position and returned to full-time teaching because that was where she perceived the most support for her work. In all of these cases, the encouragement validated the worth of the employee, and mobilized positive energy toward the work.

But encouragement also produced a very different outcome. When Hope ran into problems with her supervisor, she received encouragement from her peers that helped her to negotiate the difficulty and survive the conflict with her employment intact.

Some people that I’ve worked with and some that I haven’t worked with but--or just positive people period--they kind of helped me with the protocol when I was going through this little struggle thing; how to deal with it in a professional manner. Because, if I would have dealt with it without having someone to kind of gear me, or help me through the process, I don’t think I’d have a job today. But I’ve had some people, even from different departments and different areas that have probably heard, you know, the things that I had gone through and have known that I was unfairly treated, would literally tell me how to handle the situation in a more professional manner.

What this sequence revealed was the dependency of Hope on the affirming character of her supervisor for her survival. She was thrown out of adjustment by her negative emotional response to this person, and unable to cope within her natural psychological resources. She was vulnerable in this exchange, but received encouragement and support from her peers. The interactions with more experienced peers provided her with alternative strategies and support to be able to cope with the situation professionally.

The boss that I have now is very encouraging. She's always pointing out certain things that I need to know, and she's the type of person that will reward you when you make that effort, and knowing different information to help the college run, or help our area run a lot smoother. She's allowed me to be more confident about what I do, and when I deal with a student on one-on-one, she makes it known that she doesn't have to step in all the time to solve any kind, you know, to solve a problem, that I'm competent enough to solve whatever problem before it gets to her.

As the result of this encouragement, she was able to survive a difficult challenge with her supervisor, and move into another position with a supervisor who provided a more nurturing and supportive work environment. In this context, her security and sense of competence was maintained through her dependence on her supervisor's validation of her efforts.

Threat. Feedback that was perceived as a threat generated a lot of energy in response. For example, Yvette describes her situation of working with a supervisor who focused on the negative. "The person that I worked under as a dean, he'd just browbeat people all the time and say, 'You don't know this information?'" He would put people down all the time." Her use of the term "under" to describe her subservience to this person indicates that she perceived he was in a position of power over her. She was discouraged by the lack of validation by her supervisor. From this position of

subservience, she felt powerless to impact this person in a positive way. “I think that that is a major problem here at this college, you know? Not respecting individuals and being dictatorial.” The specific nature of the threat became explicit when she described an experience in which she was confronted directly.

They are extremely negative from the top down. Some of the things that they have said is just appalling. It is appalling. Like, “Well, if you stay in this position, you’re not going to get that much support anyway, so maybe it’s better that you do step down.” You know? And, “Yes, I’ve heard from others that you’re--you’re--you’re hard to work with, or hard to deal with.” But if that’s the case, you know, why does everybody want to take my classes?

The direct threat to her person and her role challenged her sense of worth to the college, which she questioned by her thoughts of sources of support. The threat was not based on direct experience but hearsay, “I’ve heard from others.” Perhaps this was a communication strategy used to soften the blow, but the strong negative emotion released by this feedback characterized her ongoing relationship with the administration. Perhaps this employee was difficult to work with, and negative in orientation before this interchange. However, the key element represented in the data was that threatening feedback generated an ongoing flow of negative energy with potential to spread through animated conversation from person to person. “This place is run like a concentration camp or a slave’s plantation. So many people have complained about that, and I don’t know what’s going to happen.” When she said that so many people have complained, she acknowledged that she participated in discussions with many people in which this was a topic of conversation. Use of inflammatory terms, such as “concentration camp,” revealed her ongoing negative emotion provoked by the threat.

TC received feedback through his informal network. “I’ve gotten through the grapevine back that I am kind of a rebel. That I don’t want to be a team player and

nothing can be further from the truth.” The “grapevine” provided an informal conduit for information that appeared to be perceived as trustworthy. In this situation, TC perceived that the message he received was incongruent with his sense of self. He rejected the message, but he did not appear to question whether the message was true. His response to the incongruent judgment of his character was to dismiss it. “Nothing could be further from the truth.” He clarified his experience. “I was being challenged and the common response was ‘That’s how we do things.’ Well, I don’t care how you do things! There’s a certain protocol you’ve gotta follow.”

He perceived that his ethical sense of proper professional protocol was being challenged. His sense of ethical responsibility represented a core component of what made him successful previously, so he was unwilling to compromise protocol in favor of local traditions. He was unaware that when he said, “I don’t care how you do things,” he was evidencing behavior that might be considered rebellious in this new environment. The focus of his attention was not on responding to the threatening judgment that he was a rebel, but his belief was that the judgment was an error. He was being compliant with professional protocol, which had a higher priority than local traditions, so he was really an excellent team player, on a slightly different, and more powerful team.

Georgia, a long-time faculty member, struggled as a single mother. She needed to keep her job in order to provide for her family. Over time the urgency of her need increased as she had taken note of the potential threat to her employment from the environment around her.

There was an administrator who had been one of the fair-haired boys under a previous administration and he’s been here a long time and been doing good job for the college for a long time. The president changed. The new president did not appreciate his style. It was an unconventional style, but very effective and he

worked here for 25 years. This person openly differed with the opinion of the administration and was no longer an administrator.

This administrator, in her view, did everything right. He was doing a good job for the college for a long time. He was effective, if even a bit unconventional. But with the new administration, he was a threat when his opinion differed with the higher level administration. Even though this experience did not involve her directly, she learned vicariously that if you disagree, you may lose your job. The tension was heightened by critical feedback she received one day in a meeting.

I was told to take my foot down off the table or something. And it was like supported all the way along, like I had to behave myself better at the meetings. And I said, "Well if I don't behave well enough for you, then I just won't come."

Beyond wounding her dignity, this experience was very threatening to her sense of security. She received corrective feedback for her public behavior, which extended beyond the immediate group. The correction was "supported all the way along," which communicated to her that she was not accepted as part of the group. This exclusion not only affected that one situation, but it also resulted in her perception of threat from the group that judged her negatively. As the result, she cut off her ongoing connection with her peers, leaving her isolated and more vulnerable due to the lack of support, to which she responded with a defensive stance in relation to the college.

If I behave real well, keep a low profile, the best thing that you can do for me is not notice. Keep me off your range entirely. I do my work, deal with my students and stay away from me. Leave me alone to do my job. Don't make it hard on me. Don't make me feel threatened.

As the result of her experience of threat, she struck a bargain. She would behave, lie low, do her work, and in exchange for this, she wanted to be left alone and not feel threatened. But the key element in this image, was that she has disempowered herself by cutting herself off from the larger network of support, rather than adapting in a positive

way in response to the corrective feedback. The experience of threat psychologically reduced her to capitulation to the source of the threat in order to protect herself from harm that she perceived to reside in the environment.

The void. The challenge of the void in feedback is that the individual struggles to make sense of ambiguity. Often the interpretation of the lack of feedback draws on schema from other similar experiences, or with vicarious learning from parallel situations. Jane started her work at the college with a great deal of enthusiasm, but she described the experience of committing to a task, only to find her work ignored.

Others have been very supportive in terms of, if they delegate something to me, give it to me to do and I succeed, or have an accomplishment that they gave the credit to me. And I really greatly appreciate that, because I've been in situations since then that that hasn't happened, and I kind of go, "Huh, did anybody pay attention to what we did?"

The experience of individual well-being is not developed in a vacuum, but through the interpretation of events in which the employee is actively involved. This void of feedback can be received in different ways based on the employee's mental models of what the lack of feedback might signal. For Jane, the fact that at times she succeeded in accomplishing something, but no one noticed, created an unsettling void.

However, one of the professional employees interviewed for this study was Mary. Mary and the staff with whom she works on a daily basis changed the software that was used to complete a major college process, which had the potential for impacting every employee in the institution. A lot of time and effort were invested in the task of converting to the new software, and when all was said and done, there was no fanfare or celebration, only silence. Her interpretation of the silence was that this was a very good sign of a job well done. "I think the fact that they didn't say anything was probably the best news we could have heard, which was nothing at all." Mary's interpretation of the

event began with the cognition of her professional expertise as the foundation of her relatedness to others in the environment. “I think that education and years of experience has given me this confidence that I have.” It is not too difficult a stretch to imagine that there could have been alternative interpretations of silence after a massive undertaking had been completed. But in this time and place with this person, the experience of a void in feedback produced a belief that this was “good news.”

Fred is an administrator who did not participate in the LCP. He works in a unique position within the college. Initially he related how all of the different levels of feedback affect the performance of his work. He expressed a strong sense of personal mission in his work, and a very strong internal appraisal of his ability to do the job.

I think that my role is to make this as much of a center of excellence as possible. To buoy up or bolster up the college, you know, that way. That’s my role. And there’s all the different audiences: There’s the college audience, there’s the community audience, there’s the school kids, there’s visitors, there’s the discipline, there’s the profession. All of those are parts of our constituency, none of which we can ignore. You know, we have a center of excellence, potentially ever-greater. You can’t squander that.

He expected to receive feedback from all levels of his constituency, and to use that feedback to create a “center for excellence.” He was also strongly anchored in a positive sense of himself as a professional with responsibility to hold up the standards of his discipline.

This is a high-profile job and a high-profile part of college operations. As a consequence, lots of people are aware of what we do and therefore are aware of what I do, in some manner or another, to create what we do collectively in the department. So in that sense, I’ve gotten a lot of feedback from all kinds of corners and continue to from all levels. Not people in my column of authority or line of authority, but all other. And in general terms, I would say that the feedback has been most favorable and encouraging.

He was aware of being highly visible, which meant that people were aware of the character of his work. He indicated that he used the feedback that he received to improve

service delivery as he strived to create a center for excellence. He appeared to be open to feedback from multiple sources. Knowing that other people valued the work of his department enhanced his sense of competence. All of these were very encouraging aspects of feedback which anchored him solidly into his work as a competent professional on many different levels. The scale was clearly tipped in the positive direction of encouraging feedback.

I would say that the sense of confidence about our direction and our methods, and the potential impact of those, has greatly been enhanced by comments from all sorts of folks around the college. And given that we are a service entity, that's actually very important.

But there was also a distinct reference to one category of feedback that was void: "Not people in my column of authority or line of authority." This was a critical aspect of feedback that he returned to later in his interview. Within all of the different levels of affirming feedback, the belief that he did not receive feedback within his own line of authority from the leaders who were responsible for guiding the direction of the college created a fundamentally disturbing gap in his confidence.

It's not hands off, leave them to be, and--and, you know, sort of respect their--the outcome that they arrive at themselves. It's a little bit more problematic than that because there is a sense of you don't really feel any horsepower behind you driving you forward. You really have to arrive at almost all of that yourself.

For Fred, the lack of feedback from senior administrators created an unsettling sense of ambiguity. He related how this resulted in a feeling of uncertainty about whether his work was valuable, in spite of the great effort that he had invested, and the extensive feedback he had received from a wide range of constituents. The benign disinterest in his area created a distressing sense of disconnection and even loneliness.

I don't know of hardly any problems that I've ever confronted that anybody else has ever had a solution for. Nor has it ever really been the case that a problem were

anticipated for me by someone else, and a solution anticipated on their part for me either. So it's a very--it's a very lonely position in that respect.

The emotional tone of loneliness suggested that Fred was unsuccessful in developing positive relationships with the people who seemed to matter most to his professional development in this context: the senior leaders of the college. He started with a positive sense of his ability to get the job done. The constituents who were beneficiaries of his work were shielded from knowledge of any problems he faced. He had a professional community of practice in which he was an esteemed member, yet he perceived that he received no support in responding to the challenges he faced from the leaders who held the rudder of the ship, and who might have been able to see dangerous rocks that he might have to deal with while they were still off in the distance.

And most input you get from those to whom you answer is typically evaluative, reactionary, and shallow in analysis; superficially analyzed responses to global problems, without any attempt to grasp the particularities of the context you may be confronting; for the problem that is in their radar or problems that you have that no one else has ever even conceived of as problems. And a kind of level of disinterest in your problems until they become problems for them in some fashion or manner.

Fred communicated distress that he was not involved with the leaders of the organization in a positive way that would enable him to receive feedback of support and direction that aligned him with the larger system. But his loneliness revealed a sense that he was stifled in his ability to move ahead with confidence because he was unsure when he might run up against an unyielding roadblock. He was frustrated by his disengagement from the larger system, which inhibited his sense of competence, creating a pervading sense of anxiety. This was in sharp contrast to the story of Mary converting the payroll software, who perceived the lack of feedback to be a positive rather than negative message. Psychologically, Mary's cognition might be construed as something similar to "No news is good news." This belief equipped her to respond positively to the absence of

feedback. However, Fred's experiences taught him that no news may be bad news about to unfold.

The simile I've used is that when you confront a difficulty you are in a blackened room, though all the walls of which consist of doors, only one of which goes to the outside world, but there's no lights and none of the doors have any handles. But someone will tell you've gone out the wrong door, but no one will get you to the right door.

The struggle of dealing with difficulty by applying a trial and error method in the absence of feedback from college leaders appeared to be very unsatisfying for Fred's sense of competence and well-being within the organization. Fred was a high achiever in a high profile position, who was aware that the void he experienced was not necessarily a benign silence, but one that may be characterized by the sword of Damocles that created the potential for decisions he made in darkness to take him out the perilous "wrong door." This void was more toxic to his sense of accomplishment than negative feedback, because he had no control over what may develop. In spite of all of the encouragement received by constituents of his work, this void tipped the scale to a precarious balance point.

Feedback was a prime mechanism for supporting adaptation within a social environment, and each of these three types of feedback had different implications for fostering psychological empowerment. Encouragement appeared to foster a positive social bond, which was a source of strength in times of vulnerability. By means of encouragement, the path toward valued organizational goals was highlighted so that employees could align themselves with the larger organization. However, there was also the potential for encouragement to foster dependency, as witnessed by the case of Hope, which limited adaptability in times of change. And for frontline employees far removed from the upper ranks of administrators, the encouragement of students tended to exert a

stronger influence with the potential for disrupting alignment with the larger organization when the needs and concerns of the students were at odds with the policies and procedures of the bureaucracy. Feedback that was threatening fostered negative emotions, such as fear or anger, which promoted a defensive response on the part of the employee, undermining genuine autonomy. The absence of feedback in the void produced ambiguity. To the extent that an employee was vulnerable to mistrust, this uncertainty tended to result in negative emotions related to anxiety, which appeared to inhibit psychological empowerment.

Professional development

Throughout all categories of employees at this college there was a consistent theme with regard to professional development. People who wanted to advance in this community college needed to pursue higher education. Samantha indicated that she had been encouraged to go further by her director, and Sam indicated that he had taken the opportunity to go as far as possible with advanced degrees. Ashley said it most clearly: “When I came here, I had an A. A., and it became evident very quickly that if I was going to be anything at an educational institution, I had to have education.” She went on to describe how she had earned both a Bachelors and Masters degree in her 21 years of employment. Several other respondents also referred to specific degrees that they had earned since working in the college: Associate, Bachelors, Masters and even Doctoral degrees. It was clear that many pursued postsecondary degrees because the college paid for at least part of the degree. Again, Ashley clarified the college support she received for her advanced degrees: “They didn’t pay the whole thing, you know. They paid a part of the tuition, which I think is just a really good thing.” Particularly in this changing economic context where knowledge is the primary resource that distinguished the

“haves” from the “have-nots,” the tenets of human capital theory suggest that corporate growth depends largely on the increases of learning in individual members (Brown, 1999; Livingstone, 1999).

In addition to opportunities to earn degrees, a number of references were made to the generous support for travel to conferences and professional networking activities. For Jean, this kind of support made the difference for her to be able to successfully master her new job.

My first year here I was given the opportunity to go to a two-week training program that’s specific to people in my field. And it involved being away from my job for two weeks, flying or going to one location for a week, and then being in Washington for a week. It was a very hefty price in terms of registration fee and all the cost of it. And that two-week period provided me with such a good foundation for what I needed to do and the challenges that were going to be coming to me in my job over the course of the last six years that I don’t know that I could have done it if I hadn’t gone to the training.

Support for developing this kind of professional expertise emerged across the majority of the respondents other than the career service employees, often involving travel to participate in activities designed to support professional networking activities as well as formal training. As Ashley put it, “The college has allowed me to develop my sense of confidence by attending numerous--being active on numerous boards, attending numerous conferences.” She made the distinction between conferences that involved formal learning activities and boards that also provided oversight for the development of the profession, which offered the opportunity for professional leadership development.

They actually give us the role of developing what we want in our profession in the state. And that, I think, is one of the smartest things that any governmental agency has done, because they use us that work in the field, and the knowledge that we have, to help them put together what should be done for the state. And it is an awesome opportunity, and a lot of other states have taken what we’ve done. Actually, we’re a leader in the United States.

This opportunity for learning and growing as a professional fulfilled its highest level of attainment when the professional expertise acquired over a lifetime was harnessed in service to the ongoing development of the profession.

However, as glowing as the endorsement of professional development activities within the college may have been, there was also a hint of a shadow over the use of much of the learning that took place. Jane described her frustration this way: "I see such opportunities from the things that they had sent me to with statewide or even regional work, and I bring it back, and it just doesn't seem to go any place." When knowledge was acquired but not used, it lost its power to produce positive change. Much of the pressure to acquire learning for professional development seemed to be learning for learning's sake, with little direct impact on harnessing the intellectual capital gained from learning activities, for the purpose of enhancing the college, as if the college were enhanced simply by the increase of knowledge acquired by its members. As Ashley concluded, "There's always something out there that you can tap into to better yourself." The goal of personal improvement through learning was detached from improvement of the college.

Sam noticed this problem of disseminating knowledge within the institution once acquired by an employee. He planned to address this challenge as one of the goals of the LCP.

One of the activities we engaged in was something we call sponsoring, and which was really just a way of saying "We really want you to go out and do a little networking." And by doing that, again the goal was to spread the knowledge around the organization that there are people out there with broad skills. So it's really just a matter of dispersing information about the knowledge base that we have throughout the institution.

But even in his description of the mechanism of sponsorship, he still only alluded to the idea that people in the college would appreciate that there were people in the

college with “broad skills” which went along with the idea of learning for learning’s sake. Knowing that people had knowledge, and harnessing the knowledge that people had acquired in service to organizational development were two distinctly different aspects of professional development. Across all of the interviews, it was clear that respondents were not expected to select learning opportunities that would be useful to the college, but to themselves. And it was clear that there was little institutional impact that would result from the widespread investment in professional development. The investment in learning that produced no meaningful change in the college signaled a disconnect between the individual’s growth and the college’s growth.

Special case of the LCP

The LCP was offered as a special kind of professional development within the institution that was initiated within the highest level of the organization, cutting across all divisions with an inclusive and holistic approach to leadership development. As the architect of the LCP and a respondent for this study, Sam Lawyer provided insight into the vision that gave rise to this project.

Two things that I envisioned happening--one was culture change. And by that I simply mean I envision us becoming a learning organization--a positive organization; not to say that that didn't exist, you know, or was totally absent prior to that, but certainly that was one of the areas of which we wanted to improve upon.

Sam’s vision for this leadership development program opened up the opportunity for everyone in the institution to participate as equals. He emphasized two goals that he hoped to promote in the college: to become learning-centered and positive as an organization. He went on to define the mission of the college, and then described the notion of organizational stewardship that he wanted to diffuse throughout the college as a major impetus of this program.

What we really wanted to do was create sort of a cross-functional interaction, whereby there is one goal that everyone had at the institution and that was for the best of the institution. We educate students, which is our product, and that everyone's goals are committed to doing that, and that they are positive about it; they are doing it in the very best fashion that they can. And just as they are educating the students, they're also educating themselves and helping everyone to want that common goal of being the best institution possible.

With the emphasis on interaction, Sam's vision of the LCP embodied all of the components of Menon's psychological empowerment: to engage their efforts in the very best fashion they can (perceived competence), to educate themselves with a positive attitude (perceived control), and to establish a common goal among all participants to do what's best for the institution (goal internalization). He used the term "educating themselves" which suggested that his vision had a strong emphasis on promoting personal responsibility for learning outcomes. But this personal responsibility was envisioned as unfolding in a collaborative and motivating environment which originates with "helping everyone to want that common goal of being the best institution possible."

Because the LCP originated as a comprehensive project within the upper echelon of the college, there was potential for impact on both the level of individual participants as well as the work environment in which they were involved. The specific comments about the program made by the respondents who participated in the LCP were analyzed as a separate component of the data. Neither of the faculty members who were LCP participants made a single reference to the program or its effects. Of the remaining six participants, a single positive theme emerged. The LCP promoted a good feeling among participants by encouraging people to become more effective as individuals, and to align personal and organizational goals. Wolf captured the sentiment most completely.

I think the LCP process has really helped and directed the individuals of the college to put personal goals and company goals together and giving the employees the

tools to be able to be more effective employees; more productive, more confident, and able to meet their next work challenge.

As an extension of that theme of putting personal and institutional goals together, Stephano and Wolf also considered the LCP to be the gateway to upward mobility within the institution. TC echoed their belief, but added a cautionary note of logic for the ambitious. “It’s common knowledge that if you don’t do the LCP you don’t get a promotion. Then the flipside of that is: Does everybody who does the LCP get a promotion?” As Sam envisioned the program, his “idea was really, truly to help prepare people for opportunities.” But rather than a guarantee of personal advancement,

So in that context the vision was again culture change. To be inclusive; as well as to assist individuals to become the best that they could become. To lead, to do the max that they could; lead where ever they are, and to progress or to have career progression if that's what they want.

When he said, “to lead wherever they are” he addressed the need to change the culture from the inside out. His vantage point from the executive leadership team was of the organizational need for change, but in sharp relief to that point of view, the perspective of participants was from their individual interest in career development. The inherent tension in the joining of these two diverse perspectives arose from the possibility that participants may have been motivated to participate in order to gain access to opportunities for advancement that may never materialize. This echoes a fundamental problem of ambition management in our culture defined by Brint and Karabel, (1989), “American society generates far more ambition than its structure of opportunity can satisfy”(p. 8). Stephano clearly had specific ambitions for a particular leadership position in mind, which motivated him to stay with the program. “I think the leadership program is a good thing, good concept...someday I might be able to move in and be manager.” But when it came to fleshing out the “good concept,” he considered the group activities in

the LCP to be “these silly things we do.” He was prepared to do whatever was required, but he did not see the value of the team-building activities. “They say they want you to be a more well-rounded person. I still have a hard time with that because like I said, I’ve always been needing to work growing up. I’ve always been hands on, hammer and nails.”

The culture of the upper leadership that designed the LCP was very far removed from his daily work experience, which meant that he had difficulty connecting the means of this professional development activity with the end of preparing for a specific, practical job promotion. This disconnect from the college marketplace created both a haven and a trap. The cocoon of the LCP offered a relatively safe place to take risks and experiment with new and unfamiliar learning activities, but the loop that connected back in some meaningful way to the pragmatic aspect of the daily work-life was missing. For Beau, the fact that this connection was absent meant that he had to discontinue the program after he received a promotion to manage a newly reorganized office with extremely high demand: “I’m attempting to take part in it this year, but given the responsibilities of this new position, I’ve been unable to get to very much of it at all.” The support for him to continue to develop his leadership skills did not exist in the new environment.

By contrast, Adrienne accepted the program for what it was: an opportunity to grow personally, and to learn more about the college.

I think being in the leadership program made me see another aspect of the college community, and what happens at those levels. And I think that I really enjoyed being a part of that leadership program. It made me feel like I was important enough to go to those meetings and to be a part of it and you know, see what they were trying to accomplish. I felt good about that--But for personal growth.

Adrienne enjoyed the process of feeling like a part of something important, but she wasn’t able to connect the professional development to her actual experience of

employment. The flip side of this entire professional development process was that, apart from the intangible culture change, the individuals associated with the LCP seemed to indicate that the experience with the program produced a bittersweet tension that was unconnected in a manifest way with the actual workplace. As emphasized by Adrienne,

The fact that they offered the leadership program made me feel like they valued my being important. But again, like I said, the comment they made about if you don't like what you're doing then you can leave made me feel like, you know, we're very replaceable, you know. It didn't make me feel good about my job.

While Adrienne enjoyed the LCP, particularly in contrast to her position at the lowest level of the hierarchy, she was unable to draw strength from it to be able to cope effectively with the challenges she faced in her position. A month after she finished the interview for this study, she left both the position and the department. For Adrienne, it was a great personal victory to escape the emotionally threatening environment in which she had struggled, but for the institution, the inside-out approach of the LCP toward changing the organizational culture failed to foster the desired kind of organizational learning in the work environment in this specific instance. As Sam described the traditional process:

I think bureaucracy occurs because people are being protective and they are afraid to take risks. And as a result, people won't make a decision until, you know, X vice president makes that decision because they want to protect themselves and to avoid retribution.

Adrienne took her supervisor up on the offer to leave if she didn't like the changes in her work environment, and found a position in which she is now able to operate with a greater sense of competence and control.

Decision-making Processes

A major type of influence on psychological empowerment found in the data related to the process of decision-making. Decision-making processes guided the unfolding

patterns of behavior of individuals within the organization toward useful corporate ends. As individuals made decisions, or responded to decisions made by others regarding activities in the organization, there was a never-ending stream of reciprocal influences. Four major patterns within the category of decision-making will be explored here: self-determination, collaboration, control, and conflict.

Self-determination: Power over the self

Self-determination has to do with the ability of an individual to exercise control within the realm of personal choice. Two distinct aspects of self-determination emerged from the data: the capacity for self-determination in daily activities of work and the process of individual adaptation to changing environmental contingencies. Samantha, a career service employee described her situation matter-of-factly. “Well, I have pretty much control over my work. I know what I have to do, and I get it done.” She knew what was expected of her, and her exercise of self-determination was to simply do what was expected.

Beau described his experience with a deeper awareness of the limitations of his role in self-determination on the frontline of implementation away from the locus of decision-making:

There’s a number of things that I look at and I wonder why they are the way they are, but ultimately I know that, regardless of whether or not I ever understand the reasoning behind it, it is the way they are. And my best course of action is to deal with what is, as opposed what I’d rather have be. I pretty much get to decide whether I’m going to do it or not. That’s about it. I mean, I don’t get to decide what *it* is. I don’t get to decide when *it* happens. It’s all pretty cut and dry.

His latitude to choose his way was found in the middle of circumstances over which he was able to exert little control. Like Samantha, his range of self-determination was very narrow. He was aware that his thinking about the logic of the front line work that he did

was fruitless. Things were the way they were regardless of his understanding, and he was not involved in the decision-making processes that gave rise to the situation in which he found himself. He could choose to do what he was given to do, or not. But in that choosing he was aware that there was always that freedom to choose that was within his sphere of control. He may have had little control over the circumstances in which he operated by virtue of his place in the system, but he reserved the right to decide if he was going to stay and do the work.

Bucky and Wolf occupied a place somewhat farther up the chain of command as professionals who were more or less autonomous because of expertise in their discipline. Bucky described his decision-making regarding daily work choices in this way:

The daily routine--it's really up to me to get it done. I've got so much work that has to get done and it's up to me if I want to accomplish it. I'll do this first and that second, that's fine. If I want to do the second one first, etc., that's fine.

The work was a constant that must be completed, and like Beau, Bucky had to choose first if he wanted to do it. Beyond that, he also had the freedom to prioritize tasks. Wolf introduced one other factor in the consideration: timeliness. "I'm free to arrange my work as I think it should be arranged, as long as I'm doing all my stuff in a timely manner."

Adrienne had a different reaction to the limited range of self-determination. As long as her focus was on the student, she was clear that she would do whatever was needed, but when her attention shifted to the administration in her area, she faced a very uncomfortable reality.

The comment they made about 'If you don't like what you're doing, then you can leave,' made me feel like, you know, we're very replaceable, you know. It didn't make me feel good about my job. We are not allowed to independently think. No. The decisions are made at a higher level and we're really not allowed to make decisions in our area. Everything is--just has to be asked at a higher level.

Her experience as a career service employee echoed Beau, in the awareness of her lack of freedom to think about the way work was organized in her area. She, too, was free only to decide if she would do it or not. However, the tone of the undercurrent from her administration, "If you don't like what you're doing, then you can leave," clearly articulated that she was marginal in her value to the organization. Her input was not welcome. She felt vulnerable in her lack of capacity for self-determination. She was replaceable. This vulnerability created a negative emotional charge in her work, because she was aware that she was not allowed to dissent, or her livelihood was at risk. She perceived her primary role was to serve as an ambassador for the college to the students, in which she took a great deal of personal satisfaction.

We can really get to know our students and develop a rapport with them, which we do. And they come in every time, and they see us and they know us. We hear everything from them, every complaint, every success, we hear everything from our students. They really are very, very open to us and they tell us honestly everything. I mean they really just tell us everything. And we have a very honest and candid relationship with each other because they're so open about what they need and what they're feeling. And they're very raw; they just tell us everything. And when people do that with you, you can't help but develop some kind of rapport, you know?

Her chief satisfaction in her job derived from meeting the needs of the students. "When the students come in, I think we should appear knowledgeable and competent, and have our act together, not to give them a runaround, which is what we do a lot of times anyway." Yet she was often stifled in meeting those needs because of the cumbersome policies and procedures that she was charged with imposing on the students. "And I feel their frustration a lot of times too." The identification with her students to a larger degree than with the administration appeared to contribute to feelings of vulnerability of a different kind. She was powerless as they were powerless, and their frustration with the bureaucracy became her frustration. Even if the system was not

working well for the students, she was not free to relay that information up the chain of command. Her voice was stifled in the system.

I don't really think they value feedback. And I wish in a sense that we could directly and freely speak to those who are higher in control and in charge like VPs and--and not fear reprisal, you know, be able to speak to them directly without these middle managers. Because when you speak to the middle manager, it seems like a lot of times it stops there because they don't want their bosses to know how things are going.

One characteristic that emerged in the data that appeared to positively affect the sense of self-determination was expertise. Wendy described the positive effect of her professional expertise on her capacity for self-determination. "Within my own course I have almost complete autonomy. I am the lead instructor in my course and I develop everything in the entire curriculum and all the exams and I feel valued as an expert in my field." She had been employed in her job because of her expertise, which gave rise to her authority to determine what the students would learn. The experiences she had in exercising self-determination encouraged her to perceive her value to the college as an expert.

With expertise there is also a tendency for an increase in responsibility, which appears to be self-reinforcing as a mechanism for self-determination. As Sam put it, "I've been at the college for a long time, and I've progressively assumed positions of greater and greater responsibility." His perception was that he is able to exercise a greater measure of self-determination because he demonstrated to others the value of his work over the years. "I'm given the responsibility for important tasks for the college. So my assumption is that there is an assumption that I can get it done." TC employed a different strategy in the exercise of expertise in service to self-determination.

I've been given some--a lot of latitude on that and only because I have fought for it and I have fought for it not from a sense of pride, but from a sense of this is protocol. This is the appropriate treatment.

The outcome was the same as Sam's in that both enjoyed a wide range of latitude in the exercise of their job, but TC had only been with the institution for a short period of time. His career was already well-developed when he arrived on the scene, so he perceived that he had to aggressively pursue the autonomy that he had enjoyed previously. "To be able to do my job, I've got to be able to have a certain level of latitude." That was his experience before, and if he was to continue to do his job in a professionally responsible way, he had to fight for the freedom of self-determination.

The issue of self-determination was complicated by interdependencies within the system. The more an individual depended on others to do a job, the narrower the personal sphere of influence became. In order for a person to experience a sense of self-determination, there needed to be an experience that the individual was in control of the outcome of their actions. Each time another individual impacted the outcome, self-determination was circumscribed. Sam clarified the need for a healthy balance of self-determination that was based on a larger perspective than the individual job.

I believe in a balanced approach to life pretty much. One must have many interests in order to be a whole person. And you don't want to position yourself such that if any one of those interests goes away that you're going to have a major void. For example, I'm very committed to my job; very loyal to the institution. But if I lost my job tomorrow I would not be a lost person. And that's sort of the approach that I take.

Collaboration: Sharing power with others

In the social environment of this community college, collaboration was a strategy for extending the reach of the individual beyond the limits of personal influence and knowledge, in order to accomplish larger goals or purposes. In this data, the faculty

members were the most likely to emphasize collaborative strategies to deal with complex issues. Adrienne articulated her perspective on the value of collaboration.

We really work as a team to try to help each other out with issues and problems. It's a position and a job that you can't do alone. You have to work as a team and you have to collaborate with those around you, because there's a lot of times there are so many different issues and things you're trying to help a student with. You want to do what's best for the student, so you do sometimes have to pull from the knowledge of counseling and the knowledge from a financial aid expert. You have to work as a team and collaborate together for the greater good of the student.

The core value of collaboration in decision-making was that no one individual had access to all of the knowledge needed to address the problem at hand. Adrienne recognized that she could not do the job alone, so she collaborated with experts in other areas of the college in order to provide support for the concerns of the students. Her loyalty and commitment to students was a passion that motivated her to seek out support beyond her limited knowledge base in a bottom-up approach to problem solving.

This same experience was reflected in the words of Jean, who used the same strategy of collaboration in a top-down approach.

I am the director of my department, so all decisions ultimately lie with me, but I try not to make them all because I don't always have the full knowledge. And as my department expands, and I've added a couple of employees this year, it's much harder for me to know all the answers. So I rely more on my team, and sometimes I'll go to somebody that is responsible for a certain area in my department and say, "Okay, here's a decision. What do you think we ought to do about it?" So, I guess that's--if I go back to my textbooks, it would be the participatory decision-making style in that I look for information to expand what information I have about a decision, and then make that decision in concert with the people that it'll impact, where they will have to live by it.

Even though she knew she had the authority to make decisions without involving others, she recognized the limits of her knowledge. As the size of her staff increased, and the scope of her responsibility also increased, her knowledge base had not necessarily increased to the same extent. If she made decisions without adequate knowledge she ran

the risk of making a poor decision. Collaboration enhanced the quality of decision-making power for her department. Buttruss provided one additional element to the collaborative process. He was the first faculty member to implement proactive planning in his department in order to stay ahead of the changes that were developing in his discipline. Each year, for several years, he met with a group of his faculty members to develop new goals and wish lists for tools to enhance teaching.

I work with them in a collegial way to try to have a general trend for the department. Day-to-day operation, day-to-day decision making, I don't really drag a lot of people in here and ask them what to do. But, when it comes to things that are in the planning document, I'm a facilitator for that plan. Okay. I'm not the director of that plan; I'm the facilitator. I sit around this table along with 8 or 9 other people, and we make a decision to have this as a departmental goal, or that as a departmental goal, and once we make that decision, it's my job to facilitate that, not to change it.

He described a detailed process of negotiations that involved all participants actively as equals in the decision-making process. This collaboration created a strong alliance among members of the department who were able to mount a persuasive case for mutually agreed upon needs to be met. "I'm very proud of the fact that, while people represent their own particular campuses, there is always a consensus that very often does not favor one or the other campuses." Across all of the disparate components of the college environment, this group exerted a common press for common goals as the result of the collaborative planning process. The collective vision represented in the decisions that were made positioned the individual members within the department to be well equipped to adapt to changing conditions. "We think what's best for the department. How do we want the department to move forward?"

Asserting control

At the root of decision-making, is the issue of control. At the most basic level, control is enacted through interpersonal influence. Hope was a career service employee who works directly with students. External forces, such as college policy and procedure, as well as state and federal regulation, limited and focused her role. She was a messenger with limited influence over the content of the message that she delivered. This sometimes resulted in tension in the exercise of her job.

A lot of times, especially in the area of our work, you're not going to make everybody happy, you know, because they want what they want, and they want it then and now. And because of federal regulations, we can't give them what they want.

At the same time she was important because she was the gatekeeper in a very important area aligned with federal regulation, she was unable to exercise real authority in how students were served because the rules governed her options. Hope attempted to engage with the larger organization to make an impact in the college. "I want to be involved. I have a lot of great ideas that I want to implement, or at least to, you know, present it to you." She recognized that her desire to be involved did not mean that she would be successful, but she wanted to be able to present her ideas in order to make her influence felt in the life of the college.

When I don't get a positive response in any way, whether they like it or if they don't like it, I think that if I get a negative response, it makes me feel negative, you know, in some kind of way. Maybe you didn't even try my idea.

It is clear that she wanted her opinion to matter. She wanted to have influence in a wider arena. Again and again she referred to her desire for advancement, but when her hopes were frustrated or ignored, she moved into a negative emotional response. "But if you didn't even try to consider it, then I think that that's a negative way of saying that

‘your opinion doesn’t matter, you know, to anybody.’” The belief that followed the lack of positive response to her idea was a judgment of her global worth, “Your opinion doesn’t matter to anybody.” As the result she shrank back in her ability to be effective by her negative emotional response.

Beau had been with the college for six years, during which his sphere of influence had changed radically. He was aware that at some level he was accountable, but he was given a great deal of freedom to do his job in whatever way he saw fit. His motive to excel came from his previous way of life. “I’ve always been farther, wider, higher, funnier, louder, more outgoing, more gregarious, more intense than the people around me because I had to be to survive and it carries over and it serves me rather well.” He took his cues from his colleagues, and exceeded whatever others were doing. This resulted in Beau getting the attention of the administrators further up the chain of command, who invited him to move into a supervisory role with a wider sphere of influence.

I was invited to assume the role I have now. I was not even aware that it was there or available. But the people who needed to fill it came to me and said, “Here’s what we need. Do you think you could do that?”

He was invited. His determination to be larger than life and exceed his peers sent the message that he was a higher performer compared to the rest of his group, which distinguished him as a leader. He continued this pattern that “has served me rather well,” but in his new role, this strategy had not been as effective.

I know that I’m doing what I’m doing in a manner that exceeds the expectations of the people who put me there to do it, because they’re baffled sometimes at the intensity with which I pursue the task.

When he said that his supervisors were “baffled,” this did not necessarily indicate a positive response. He pursued the new set of tasks with the same zeal as when he worked

alone, but he soon discovered that his role was limited by the same people who invited him to move upward in the organization.

It's to the point right now where I think there's people getting annoyed with me because I need certain things to function. If you want me to take this process and do it right, I need to know what the process is. If you're in charge of the process and I call you up and say 'Please send me the procedure,' and you don't have it or can't send it to me, then I'm not going to hear you when you tell me I'm doing it wrong because I asked, 'How do I do this right?' and you won't tell me, you know?

He used the word "annoyed" to convey the emotional tone that was used to stifle his questioning up the chain of command. He experienced a greater internal pressure to excel in his command of his new position, but he became aware of the need for control by others who felt threatened by his larger than life intensity.

In some sense it could be interpreted as me saying: You don't know what you're doing, so here, I'm gonna do it for you. You tell me if it's right or not, you know? And I don't really care who gets credit for it, I just want to be able to function over here.

His zealous dedication paid off in a promotion to a supervisory role with a wider scope of responsibility, but the result was a diminished sense of control in the new position. "It's harder now that I'm in a supervisory role than it was when I worked alone" Ultimately his higher level responsibility to the college resulted in a loss of autonomy and diminished control over his daily work.

I don't want to hassle with anybody, but now if I point out something in a procedure that's goofy or contradictory I'm concerned that I'm perceived as finding fault, as trying to be smarter than everybody, and I just want to know what to do.

He was pinched in the middle between two groups of people who operated in two different arenas: the administrative chain of command in his division, and the front line workers who reported to him.

On a day to day basis I'm responsible for four other people getting this stuff right and I don't know what right is. And the people that are working for me are coming 'How do you do this?' and I'm saying 'I don't know. They won't tell me.'

He had responsibility without control, which limited his freedom to do his work to the level of quality that he expected of himself. Once again, he had no peers with which to compare himself so that he could excel in his new role by comparison. His new “neighbors” were his supervisors, and it would have been counterproductive to try to distinguish himself at their expense.

Fred clarified an important feature of the organizational culture that Beau may not have understood. “Every group that gets together is a group that’s constituted within a vertical hierarchy in order to arrive at decisions related to resources or policy, but there’s no lateral structure at all.” The lack of lateral structure within the college limited his ability to employ his preferred strategy of standing out above his peers, frustrating his sense of control over his work and career development.

The power to define what is error comes from the power to determine what is right and wrong in a social interaction among people. In the college setting, tasks are organized in complex and changing patterns that evolve in response to the environment. The perception of the right course of action varies based on the people who are involved, the challenges that they encounter, the clarity of the operating rules, and the time available to respond to the challenges. The greater the complexity in operating rules, the more rapid the rate of change in environmental variation, the farther the distance of the personnel from decision-making authority, the more difficult the process of resolving novel situations without “error.”

You’re doing something one way for weeks and weeks and all of the sudden an e-mail comes that says, “No we’re gonna do it this way from now on.” And I mean it, sometimes I don’t feel like I have any control over how we’re doing stuff and what we’re doing. And there are other times I take great delight in saying “Because you told me to,” especially when I tried to say, “But, this won’t work.”

Where there was error, there was also tension regarding the cost of the error to the institution, which may have been perceived differently by different parties in the struggle. In this struggle for control, negative emotions tended to be released that diminished psychological empowerment for all involved. In order to minimize negative emotions in situations involving a struggle for control, Beau drew on the metaphor of the circus.

It's a whole lot easier to move the lion through the hoop when you're standing on the other side of it with the food than it is when you're standing behind him with a whip. So, my approach is to point out the benefits of solving this problem now in an equitable fashion where you do what I want, and we both win.

In this way, he exercised control, but framed it as a win-win situation. However, the tools that he had to offer as benefits at this lowest rung of organizational leadership were very limited. He started with mutual place of agreement, and then appealed to logic as a means for influencing compliance.

Look, I know it seems dumb to you. It seems dumb to me, too, but somewhere along the line someone decided that's the way it's supposed to be. And all the way down from them to you, everybody made a choice to go along with it.

He appealed to the need for conformity to group norms as a means of fostering solidarity.

If you don't want to go along with it, that's your choice and you're free to make that choice, but it'll all work a whole lot better if you do what we're supposed to, the way we're supposed to do it, when we're supposed to do it, and smile while you're doing it and you'll be happier and I'll be happier; everybody'll be happier.

At the opposite end of the spectrum, Sam's sphere of influence grew continuously over the nearly three decades he worked at the college. He started in the instructional arena and gradually expanded his influence to the place he now occupies in the last few years of his career at this college. "As a member of the senior-management team, one of the things that I, along with the other vice presidents of the college do is to--we make decisions on, basically, the direction for the college." At the highest level in the

organization, he was able to influence the way things unfold because he was invited to share his thoughts.

I'm consulted by the president on a fairly regular basis about various things that he is trying to decide, or trying to gather information. There's a wide range of people that I work with here at the college also tell me that they respect my opinion and ask my opinion on a wide range of things.

He did not operate in a vacuum as a lone individual, but as part of an articulated group that shared responsibility by means of differentiated roles.

So most major policy decisions are discussed among the vice presidents, then discussed with the president. And then of course, ultimately, he makes his recommendation to the Board. So I play a wide role, I guess, in doing that. Specifically--my specific job--I focus on planning and forecasting for the college, as well as benchmarking and insuring institutional effectiveness.

He was careful to note that he was part of the discussion, but the president made his own decisions. He did not try to take credit or in any way usurp the president's authority. Even at this executive level, the sphere of influence was negotiated by means of peer relationships. The task was subordinate to the interactions among the people involved in carrying out the tasks.

I try to build relationships, and try to build win-win situations. I do a lot of things behind the scenes. I don't like giving orders or giving directives. I would rather convince people that they should do this, or not do this; or whatever the case might be. I do a lot of things behind the scenes and that's by going from person to person, one-on-one contact, and getting people to buy into a solution, or an idea that I think is appropriate for the college. And very often things happen and there is no overt connection to me whatsoever, but it is something that I worked on very hard behind the scenes. And to me that's about relationships. I think that's very, very important.

But Sam was able to acknowledge the divisions within the college that can hinder collaboration.

One of the things that many organizations have is a popular term that people like to use, is sort of like silo-mentality, where you have divisions and this division functions this fashion, and that division functions that fashion.

He was careful in his use of language that created a degree of separation between the “popular term that people like to use” and his own organization. He communicated ideas abstractly. “If you have a learning organization you basically move decisions to the lowest level possible, because the assumption is that the person has the ability to make it.” He believed that this college could become a learning organization, but it had not yet fulfilled its potential in this area.

The vice president doesn't necessarily know the best way to do a small procedure in the registration office. And should not have to sign off on that procedure. He or she should certainly empower that decision to be made at the lowest position possible and realize that if there's an error made that you fix it, but you don't shoot John.

In his vision for the future toward which he hoped to direct the energies of the college, he envisioned delegation of decision-making and release of control to the lowest possible level, accompanied by freedom from retribution. By communicating this vision, he showed that he was aware that this was not necessarily the way that things operated at that time.

Conflict

Psychological empowerment does not refer to a state of freedom from conflict, but an active orientation toward addressing areas in which conflict might be present. In this section, strategies will be explored that characterize an empowered approach to conflict, as well as factors that hinder the expression of empowerment. It is interesting to note that the professional employees interviewed for this study seemed to be completely removed from awareness of conflict. The challenges described with the greatest intensity appeared at the highest and lowest end of the spectrum among career service and administrators.

Hope, a relatively new career service employee, described the ongoing conflict that she experienced with her previous supervisor, and as the result of her sustained conflict, she developed new skills that permitted her to survive the conflict.

That person is in that authority. I need to respect the position and to learn how to go through proper protocol when dealing with an issue. That if I have a problem with my immediate supervisor, I'll try to solve it at that level. If it can't be solved, then I go to the next person higher up to, you know, intervene or sit in on what's going on and see if it can be solved at that level. Just to take the proper steps.

This personal strategy of detaching from her negative emotions enough to follow protocol in the chain of command allowed her to develop personal resilience to bounce back from the struggle rather than be consumed by it.

But farther up the line, a veteran faculty member and department chair, Buttruss, gave full vent to his negative emotions in order to manipulate the system to do as he wished. "If I get angry and frustrated, you betcha I'll jump over somebody to get the job done, but never for me on a personal basis." Although he was clear that his motivation was emotionally focused, he perceived that his concern was not personal. "I'm getting a lot of crap—'Oh, we can't do this because--'" Buttruss had little patience for college procedures that did not seem logical to him.

"So I went over that person, and I called the person above that person, and I said, 'Let me give you a scenario.'" He relayed the conversation he had with a frontline employee, and the decision was made by "the person above that person" that if Buttruss wrote up his complaint, he would have his way. What was not stated in this exchange was that his personal victory came at a cost to someone who had less power in the system. Yet the policy that was in question was not addressed. "So that's the kind of idiocy that I will go after. I will go over somebody to deal with it." He accomplished his personal goal, but the real problem of poorly developed policy remained still a problem for others who

might not pursue their personal interests with such fierceness. What may appear to reflect psychological empowerment may actually be a disguise for bullying which privileges personal power and rank within the system.

This suggested that the way the college dealt with conflict within the system may in fact be part of a problem that inhibited participation of all members of the community. Jane, a veteran faculty member described her experience, and the belief she developed about resolving problems. “My way of resolving conflict is to talk about it rather than ignoring it. I realize that’s not everybody’s way of dealing with it.” She preferred to be direct, but she was not necessarily supported in this approach. “When I’ve proposed something and I either don’t hear anything back or I get, ‘Well, somebody else has been assigned to do that,’ I just drop it.” Her resignation demonstrated that she has learned over time to avoid frustration by trying to move ahead without support. “When I first started here, I would have pushed it a little bit harder. But I’ve learned that the educational institution is very slow at taking motion and can be very indirect in its solutions.” She articulated her strategy to retreat from engagement rather than persist in the face of challenges. This was partly because over the years she became discouraged from hoping for action that never took place. She had essentially given up.

Coming from the administrative side of the house, Fred articulated the dynamic at work in this process of resolving conflict. Fred approached the issue of resolving conflict through the cool, detached lens of logic.

I’d rather be focused on what’s, you know--getting the new thing built, the new process, the new whatever; I think that’s how you resolve conflict. You--you solve the cause of the conflict. I’m very pragmatic and common-sense in that regard. I don’t think people’s emotions really matter. My emotions don’t matter. I don’t think anybody’s emotions that much matter. I think arriving at the logical, common-sense solution, people ought to put their feelings to one side. I don’t think

their feelings have much of a place in decision making. It's not about appeasing people.

But even as he said that it's not about appeasing people, he acknowledged that in fact, he had discovered that very often problem solving will not occur without appeasing people. "It's hard to get any group of people to just do something. People want to be convinced as to why they should do it." He communicated a very strong degree of frustration as he clarified the experiences he had trying to accomplish something in his department when the external support was not readily forthcoming.

"I will sit on my hands unless you make me enthusiastic about what it is that you'd like me to think, feel, do, or agree to". So, I find that just very self-indulgent, when I really think that people should just go with the solution.

His judgment polarized him and prevented him from accepting the reality of the situation as it was, and moving on to develop a more effective strategy for resolving the conflict.

Because if we are looking at a scenario which has a specific set of variables and a particular outcome, and if we are talking about what is truly the logical answer, I don't see the problem here. There ought not be any conflict.

What Fred revealed in this conclusion was that he had taken a stance that said he expected everyone to approach the problem-solving process in his logical way, and he was in denial that this was part of the problem. He was unable to move ahead until he developed a more effective strategy than polarized judgment to address reactionary emotion.

Sam clarifies the way that he conducts his role as a mediator of conflict in the college:

If it's something that is sort of a high level conflict, then generally, usually I'll work with individuals one-on-one and try to get them to understand my view on the conflict, or why I made a certain decision. Or why a certain situation exists.

Sam's stance in this situation was that he would work with people to persuade them of the value of his perspective. His gentle approach worked well for him over the decades of his relationship with the college, permitting him to rise to the senior leadership of the college. He was clear that he expected to arrive at understanding with individuals.

I probably would just simply try to pull the concerned parties together and let's talk about it, and arrive at a solution. Well at least an agreement to understand and live with, whatever it is, even if there's not total agreement.

Here he got to the point that Jane was making. Even if there was incomplete agreement, the decision would stand, and sometimes the best that was hoped for was that the solution was something that everyone will "live with." The case was closed.

But in this process what may have often been missed by the senior administrators was that they may not have had access to the full measure of intelligence regarding the issue of concern. Adrienne was working on the frontline with students in a department that was undergoing rapid change, which resulted in a high degree of turmoil within her peer group. She tried to communicate her experience of the challenges of implementing the changes envisioned by the administrators in her chain of command, but her words fell on deaf ears. "When you speak to the middle manager, it seems like a lot of times it stops there because they don't want their bosses to know how things are going." Throughout her interview she returned to this theme. She indicated that she tried to communicate the problems that she and her peers were facing, and she was rebuffed and even threatened. She desired to communicate with someone higher in the chain of command because she believed that the problems were of such a magnitude that the college suffered the fall out of diminished student engagement, and that the senior administrators would want to know this

I think there should be some kind of forum where we could communicate directly with them and not have this fear of “I’ll lose my job,” or “Someone’s going to be angry with me because I’m telling the truth and expressing my feelings.”

Her obvious concern for her livelihood created a situation charged with chronic internal conflict. She had a strong positive bond of engagement with the students that outweighed her loyalty to the middle managers who changed the system in a way that affected students negatively.

I can’t just be in a department where there’s issues and problems and they aren’t being resolved. Either I have to try to resolve them or I have to get out of that department, because it’s a conflict with my integrity. And I--that’s what I’ve been feeling the whole time I’ve been in there- I’m in conflict. And it doesn’t feel good. And I feel like I’m screaming internally and no one’s hearing that--you know--no one’s hearing that these problems exist and that we need help with them.

The deeper moral value of her sense of personal integrity was at stake in this emotionally charged situation. She was conflicted by her desire to resolve the issues and her lack of authority to speak in this context. She was aware of the risk to her livelihood. As she anticipated the future she was squeezed between two unsatisfactory choices for her behavior: to jeopardize her job by providing the negative feedback that was clearly not acceptable, or to find another job. Preserving the status quo was not something that she considered as an option. In order for her to preserve the status quo, she would have had to adapt to a role of compliance, which would have permitted the problems that she perceived continue without resolution. She believed in the ideal of the college mission to serve the students, yet she was a part of a process that she perceived as harmful to both students and her peer group of frontline employees.

And I think in that sense that our missions are the same, our goals. We both want what’s best for the student. And I think at times we’re in conflict over that, and how to do that. And I think it’s an ever-changing process. And, you know, I’m trying to make it better.

In spite of her passionate and persistent desire to be a part of the systems of the college that supported students, she found herself locked into a powerless position in which she was the agent of the organization that told the students that they must “jump through hoops.” She resigned herself to the fact that the system was not going to change in the way that she would like, because “you’re not allowed to be part of the process to change it.”

Both Jean and TC identified a strategy that seemed to hold the greatest potential for effectively addressing the issue of conflict in this environment. Jean said, “You go in with a solution. You know, if you’re identifying a problem, you also present the solution to that problem.” She was very aware of the delicate nature of identifying a problem, and the tendency for negative feedback to provoke a defensive response, so she approached the problem with a gentle style of focusing on solutions. “ ‘This is not working because....But here is something that might work more effectively,’ and then have that somewhat drafted out.” She made a point of putting her ideas in writing in order to give the other person time to absorb what she was saying.

TC perceived that in conflict situations, the problem and solution were intertwined. He shared his belief that it was necessary to perceive that in order to be effective in persuading others to listen to him:

I think that in any situation where you’re looking at a conflict or a problem, for it to be a problem, there’s gotta be a solution and the solution is part of the problem. The two are together. You gotta put them together to present your case. That gives your case more validity. That gives you more opportunity to sell something. I hate to say that, but sell your case. To sell your case you’ve got to be able to give them an alternative.

By presenting the solution embedded in the problem, he enhanced his position and his power over those who might just want to complain.

Trusting: Facilitating Alignment

The final category within psychological empowerment that emerged from the data revolved around the issue of trusting. To the extent that individuals were able to trust, they were also able to commit their energy to the larger goals of the institution. There were many different facets of trusting that could be explored. But the primary issue that will be explored in this section is the orientation of the energy of the employee either toward positive and active engagement with college goals or against positive and active engagement with college goals.

The positive orientation of trust emerged in this data as a very personal issue related to interpersonal bonds between specific people in the workplace. The dynamic of organizational trust was characterized succinctly by TC. “Anybody’s gonna lead me, first of all, I gotta trust ‘em. That’s the first thing I feel in leadership. You gotta trust who’s leading you and you gotta trust in their ability to lead you.” He said this through gritted teeth, because he experienced a number of challenges to his ability to trust his leader. But he learned from that experience, and crystalized it into a capacity that he intended to take forward into his leadership responsibilities.

If I’m gonna try and be a leader to someone I’m not gonna ask them to do something I wouldn’t do. I have to gain their trust first before I can lead them and then I have to show them that I have some skill with which to lead them.

There was a tendency for a reciprocal relationship to exist, in which the individual was willing to trust because they were trusted by the other person. For example, Hope was restored to her sense of self-worth because of the trust invested in her by her new supervisor.

It kind of builds your self-esteem to know that she trusts you to that point, that you’re able to handle your job the way it’s supposed to be handled without management or the upper hand getting involved in the situation.

As the result of the trust given to her, she had faith in herself. This was also reflected in the experience of Jean who described a close, trusting relationship with her supervisor.

I'm very fortunate in my supervisor and the accessibility I have to him and the level of communication we have and the understanding that we have about what stays in the room and what doesn't and how freely we share.

The level of trust that Jean referred to included open communication in which confidentiality could be maintained. "We share enough that there's a real level of trust."

Beyond the trust between two individuals, Sam described trust as a fundamental character trait. "I'm given the responsibility for important tasks for the college. So my assumption is that there is an assumption that I can get it done. So I feel that my capabilities are trusted." Trusting in the competence of employees was a major component of trust in the workplace. TC perceived it in a similar way. "You're given a certain level of authority, and it's a certain level of trust that the upper management or administration has expressed by virtue of letting you have that authority." But the authority that came through validating personal trust-worthiness was something that was earned over time. Sam related the story of how he evolved within the college as the result of proving himself trustworthy in progressively responsible positions. There was an interaction effect in this progression as he became increasingly more valuable with every investment that was made in his professional development.

Well because I've been at the college for a long time, and I've progressively assumed positions of greater and greater responsibility, along with the opportunity to engage in a wide range of professional development. I think that I've had a growing sense of empowerment as well as a desire to assist others in that same role. And the college has been a relatively safe place to take risks, thus one can step outward and do things, that's healthy.

He was at a stage of life where his desire was to give back to others the same kind of support that he had received along the way. He did not arrive as a polished gem in the institution, yet he was invested with trust and permitted to take risks along the way, which contributed to his professional evolution. He developed the LCP as a vehicle by which others may have access to the same kind of institutional support and investment.

I'm a volunteer. I will volunteer to do practically anything and I seldom say 'No' when I'm asked to do things. And so all of that together is sort of an awareness thing to me. I make the assumption I can do most anything I set my mind to within reason. Not everything obviously, and if I can't of course I will say so, but I think because I operate in that fashion that a lot of people are aware what specific skills I have and competencies that I can carry out.

Sam developed trust in his own abilities, before he could demonstrate them to others. He started as a psychologically empowered individual, and built upon the foundation of personal confidence over many experiences of validation. But there was a process of reciprocity, in that his habit of volunteering fostered awareness of his value broadly across the institution. This component was centrally important in his view of developing an empowered workforce, so he built a networking component into the LCP in order to promote the active exposure of participants around the college.

The darker side of the coin involved the experiences that created beliefs of mistrust. This kind of activity created a block in the support for psychological empowerment because of the negative emotions associated with mistrust. For example, when Yvette said, "I dare not talk to the people who are in charge because they were so negative. I don't want to go and talk with them anymore. I don't want to have anything to do with these people," she described a breach in her relationship with her supervisor that prevented the free flow of communication, and ensured a gap in the knowledge of her administrators regarding the real needs of her area. She cut off the communication that

she perceived as personally threatening in order to preserve her sense of efficacy. The breakdown in this area of functioning in the college may be completely unnoticed by upper level decision-makers until problems are large enough to make it onto someone's radar.

TC provided a window into a disturbing interaction that unfolded with his supervisor. A chance encounter with another employee on the elevator created a breach in his already strained relationship with his supervisor. He opened the story with the acknowledgement of his belief that his supervisor was not trustworthy. "Now, one thing that does happen is information's kept from us, you know? This goes back to the issue of trust."

I had an employee working for me in Department P 'cause Department P reports to me. I'm coming up the elevator on a Friday, and this person on the elevator tells me "So how do you feel about so-and-so getting a promotion? She's gonna be my new boss." I go "Really? When did this happen?" and her eyes went like this and she goes "You're joking with me, you don't know about this?" and I go "No I don't know anything about this," so the woman starts to cry on the elevator.

The person in question was a highly favored employee in TC's area. His immediate response, after comforting the crying woman on the elevator, was to confront his supervisor directly. "Why be so secretive? She got the promotion two weeks ago! Let me know about it. What else are you keeping from me?" In all probability, TC was unaware of how intimidating his expression of anger may have been to his supervisor. She countered his challenge with a dodge. "Oh, I didn't know about it." He was infuriated by this response, and a permanent breach unfolded in the interaction that followed. "Yeah you did. Don't lie to me. Don't lie to me, 'cause now you're insulting my intelligence." As he recalled the event, he became agitated once again, as if a core value had been violated. "I look like I'm a fool now, and it's not a matter of me saving face. It's a matter

of what else are you keeping from me? This is the tip of the iceberg.” His capacity to trust was ruptured beyond the simple conflict, at a fundamental level in which he perceived that this was a symptom of a much deeper problem. “It’s unprofessional. You’re trying to create a team here? Well, you’re wearing away the fiber that keeps the team together here.” His supervisor’s childlike deception of denying knowledge that she obviously had regarding the event was a sign of unprofessional behavior. TC placed responsibility for the breakdown of trust entirely on her shoulders.

However, as he stated in another instance, within each problem existed the solution. The biggest threat to TC’s willingness to trust was his willingness to move entirely into mistrust. This latent capacity to give up and move into negative emotions was a vulnerability that hindered him from gaining access to the trust of the people who were keeping information from him. It was a self-protective act on the part of his supervisor to put off the difficult task of revealing information to TC that might provoke an angry response. In this situation, his display of anger revealed a limit to his psychological empowerment, that was just as restrictive as his supervisor’s apparent deception.

I was extremely irritated, because it’s kind of embarrassing when you’re coming up on an elevator on a Friday, the weekend’s coming, you feel like a million bucks, the weather’s great, you’re gonna play some golf on Saturday, it’s fantastic and all of the sudden you get hit with this atom bomb and it’s one of your top employees, you know?

TC carried within himself the solution for his disconnection from his supervisor. In order to gain access to her trust, he would need to develop a capacity to work through his mistrust.

Behavior and Emotions: Fleshing out the Organizational Message

Doing My Job

The most obvious aspect of behavior in the workplace noted in this study involved the act of doing one's job. In this section, behaviors related to psychological empowerment will be explored. Many of the references to the act of working were so specific that it would be counterproductive to separate the specific, integral, and often personally revealing descriptions of work without also running the risk of disclosing the real identity of the employee.

One aspect of job-related behavior was the sense of well-being that accompanied satisfactory job performance. Several people simply stated, "I enjoy my job." The emotion of enjoyment was associated with the core theme of meaning described by Lazarus (1991) that "we think we are making reasonable progress toward the realization of our goals" (p. 267). When people enjoy what they do, the "positive emotions broaden people's modes of thinking and action, which over time builds their enduring personal and social resources" (Frederickson, p. 163). Bucky related it this way:

I enjoy working, I enjoy working, I enjoy doing my job. It's stressful at times, but to me the better I do my job, the better the school is, and hopefully they'll come back and reward me for that. It's a mutually beneficial situation.

As a professional employee, he perceived that he had control over how well he completed his work, which in turn enhanced the institution of which he was a part. By doing his work to the best of his ability, he was doing the best he could to make the college a good institution. He expressed a hope that his efforts would be rewarded, which signaled also the potential for disappointment if his hopes were ultimately unfulfilled. But his conclusion represented a common theme: the connection between the employee and the employer was a mutually beneficial relationship.

Samantha, a career service employee, related the value of doing her job to the benefit the college received. “My job is instrumental as far as the projects and the record-keeping of the projects, from inception to completion. And so I feel that my daily job is a contribution.” She was satisfied when she fulfilled her responsibility in the daily tasks of planning and record-keeping; she did her part to fulfill the mission of her department. She believed that the record keeping role she played was “instrumental” in the accomplishments of projects of her department. “I’ve been given the responsibilities, and I meet those responsibilities.” She was satisfied that she could be counted on to be faithful in the tasks that she completed responsibly, but it was clear that she did not see herself as the one who initiated or governed the projects completed in her area. She did what was given to her.

One other individual who expressed a similar theme was Wolf, who described a direct connection between the job of the college and her own task performance within the college. “The college’s goal is to provide the best services to the students and to the community and my goal is to provide the best service to my customer within the college. I don’t really impact the students directly.” Even though she did not see herself engaged directly in fulfilling the mission of the college to educate students, her work as a support for the people that did directly educate students was done with an attitude of high quality service. In that way, her work contributed to the education of the students. “I think with my personal goal of providing the proper service to my customer, I’m aligned with the goals of the college.”

In addition to the service motive, another distinct element involved in the performance of work had to do with enjoyment of the opportunity to exercise the skills in the area of expertise in the workplace. Wendy, an instructor, described her job:

Within my own course I have almost complete autonomy. Within my course I am the lead instructor in my course and I develop everything in the entire curriculum and all the exams and I feel valued as an expert in my field.

Wendy appeared to take a great deal of satisfaction from the control she had over the courses she taught. There was a clear connection between her sense of autonomy over the curriculum that the students received from her, and her professional status as an expert. Similarly, Jean was valued as an expert in her job, but rather than viewing her expertise as a reason for autonomy that implied a detachment from others, she took a slightly different stance.

What I do is unique to the campus. There's no one else in my role on this campus. And so I'm the expert. No matter how little I know, I'm still the--I still know more than 99.9% of the people in my area of things.

In her role as resident expert, Jean considered her expertise to signal a responsibility to share her knowledge with those who knew less than her. The design of her work was to engage people who needed her knowledge and to provide the support of knowledge that they lacked. The value of the team model for organizing work was characterized by Ashley, an administrator.

I value who I work with and make it known right up front that I'm a team player. There isn't anything I'm going to ask you to do that I'm not willing to do. I just got finished sitting on the floor hooking up some computers over in Central campus. I mean, I'm not the type of person that looks at a job description and says, "That's not my job." I'm here to contribute to the college in whatever needs to be done.

While Ashley may have developed expertise in her particular line of work, as did Wendy or Jean, her commitment to the team model superceded her status. She was willing to do tasks that were clearly not associated with her job or her area of expertise,

because the job needed to be done, and she was part of a team committed to doing the work.

At the lowest level of the hierarchy, Adrienne, a frontline career service employee, spoke with great delight as she described her interactions with students:

And I know that when students come to me and I connect with them, I go over every single thing that they have to do. And I always try to empower them and make them feel like “This is going to be great! And I’m going to do well.” And when they get up and leave from me I want them to feel positive, and like they’re excited about starting, and they usually are. I feel good about that.

It was clear as Adrienne talked that she enjoyed her role of being a cheerleader for the students more than any other aspect of her job. Even though her emotional enjoyment of the student contact wasn’t required, it was clearly the aspect of her job from which she gained the most satisfaction. She seemed to draw strength from the enjoyment she transmitted to students. Even though she articulated elsewhere that she felt threatened by feedback that she was expendable, she didn’t want to transmit that fear to the students, but preferred to transmit excitement.

We’re the first people that they see, and I think it’s really important for that first contact to be a positive one. Because it’s the image that we give to those students, and I think it has to be a positive one. And I believe that you have to really make them feel like--that they can do this; and that they can go to college, and that they can make it through.

She took personal responsibility for establishing a positive connection with each student that she served. Her focus of attention was not on what her supervisor had communicated, or on her lack of an appropriate procedure manual, but on the importance of her personal contact with the student as a representative of the college. Beyond the initial contact, she communicated her willingness to follow through in the relationship. However, the system in which she worked was not a system that conformed to her desired level of support for accommodating student needs.

You know for retention purposes I think we have to do everything we can to make the process streamlined and efficient and a positive experience for them. And I feel their frustration a lot of times too.

This deep rapport that she established with students at the boundary level of the institution provided Adrienne with a strong personal sense of satisfaction that overrode her distress from other sources in the hierarchy of the institution. She was confident she was doing good work because she could see it in the connection she made with her students.

I'm really amazed at how many of them come over there so much to see us and to talk to us and sometimes they don't even have any business there. They just want to come over and vent and tell us what's going on with them.

With the affirmation of a job well done coming directly in response to her efforts, she knew she was doing her job well in the eyes of the people she cared about. Because she was tied most directly to the interests of the student, and distanced by negative feedback from the needs of the larger institution, her desire was first and foremost to meet the needs of the students. This strong positive connection with the students became a stimulus for conflict in the conduct of her work, when she was expected to require the students to fulfill bureaucratic requirements that she perceived as unnecessary for students, but nonetheless mandatory. This challenge resulted in emotional conflict expressed as frustration. Her preference was clearly to align with the interests of the students rather than the requirements of the policies and procedures of the college that she perceived were responsible for creating an inefficient and negative experience for students. When she said she felt their frustration, she showed that her preference was to identify with the student. She wanted to serve their needs and to support them, and she identified with the frustrations that they expressed about college policies that made it difficult for them. But the barrier in communication between Adrienne and her supervisor

blocked that information from making an impact on the way work was organized in the institution. The wealth of knowledge that she gathered from the individual contacts with large numbers of students was shared among her peers in the office, but never moved inward to the decision-making processes of the college.

The challenge of working in a bureaucracy impacted employees at all levels. More of this will be discussed in a subsequent section of this chapter, however, as the issue related to doing one's job, Fred, an administrator described his frustration of trying to negotiate the procedural maze of the college.

The ability of the college to give clear guidelines, clear process, efficient process in most of those cases is absent, and so one has to concoct a way of accomplishing the movement from A to B, hope to God that when you ask the people, "Can I do this?" or "How should I approach this?" that they understand sufficiently what you need to get an informed answer.

Fred's emotional tone of frustration revealed a disdain for the lack of clear and efficient operating policies and procedures, which required him to tamper with the workings of the system in order to accomplish his intended objective. As reflected in earlier statements, his detachment from the college made it difficult for him to navigate the system at times, particularly when the people who were responsible for supporting the various policies or procedures were not be able to make sense out of his unique situation in order to find the appropriate method to solve his particular problem, which exacerbated his frustration in trying to get the job done. "And frequently you don't, and then everything gets all tangled up and someone says, 'Why are you doing it that way?' And the reason why is because nobody had a better idea. This happens thousands of times." This pattern of frustration with negotiating the procedures of bureaucracy represented a particular challenge as the college initiated changes in response to new laws and rules, new ways of organizing the work, or changing patterns of behavior among students.

A final example of the bureaucratic challenge was taken from Beau. "It's all pretty cut and dry. I mean, they come, they do what they need to do to give the system what it wants, and you do what's happening then." He is pragmatic about working within the system of rules and procedures of the bureaucracy. "You do what's happening then" meant that he was involved in a given moment with a student, because that was how he fulfilled his role. However, his specific function was designed to react to the issues and concerns that the student brought into the office. He was not a creator of the situation, but a reactor within the system. Sometimes this resulted in conflict as the interests of the student didn't fit the plans of the larger system, leading to novel challenges that needed to be addressed.

Everything that I'm involved with here is in a state of flux and so on a day to day basis, I mean, I can call three different people who give me three different answers to the same question and they're all people who wrote the procedure and are supposed to know.

When he said that he "can call" he was referring to the chain of command policy in his area of responsibility. If he encountered a novel situation that was not spelled out by the new procedure manual, he was not permitted to respond to the situation without first consulting with an administrator further up the chain of command. However, the administrators had worked as a team in the development of the manual, so there were several different people who might answer his questions, but little consistency among them since the system that had been constructed was in the process of being revised. This led to a regular pattern of calling different administrators throughout the day, while waiting with students involved in the various novel concerns until a coherent resolution for each problem was determined.

Changes and Challenges

One of the most difficult aspects of behavior in this workplace involved the challenge of incongruence between personal values and institutional practice. Whether the challenge was policy, practice or person, many of the employees described a deep struggle in order to find a way to resolve the internal conflict that resulted from doing his or her job. As a veteran of many changes over the decades, Ashley responded matter-of-factly to the challenge of the basic tone of college climate.

We've had some negative presidents and some positive presidents, and they...the ones that are positive, we seem to grow a lot more with because they give the sense of wellbeing and security that helps you when you're trying to do a job.

The importance of the leadership for setting a positive institutional tone was a key element for promoting positive growth among employees. However, a great deal of growth also occurred as people responded to challenges and found the strength and ability to rise above them. Beau referred to an encounter with an administrator passing through his office during a high demand time.

It annoys me to no end when how fast we serve 'em becomes more important than how accurately we serve 'em. You know, when people walk in through and go, "You're getting a pretty big line here." The words I want to say are: "Well, you can help someone or you can take a number and wait because I don't have time to talk to you 'cause I'm trying to help someone." I haven't done that yet. And there's a place in me that, whenever those words run through my brain it's like "Don't do it, don't do it, don't do it! You need this job!" And I'm like, "Yeah, I know. The hoops. I'm jumping, see?"

In that one brief encounter, his commitment to service and his livelihood were both threatened by a casual comment by a detached administrator who did not realize the increase of frustration produced by his words. Beau was working in a very high demand setting, trying to serve a large group of students with a small staff, and the value

represented by his judge was that he wasn't working fast enough. His internal battle was clear when he told himself not to snap back with a comment that would cost him his job.

Hope described another strategy for working through the dissonance of receiving requests from her supervisor that produced personal conflict. She was able to learn how to navigate the conflict with her supervisor. She would take the requests that she believed were inappropriate and reason through how to respond.

If I was in my old management where I was asked to do something that I felt was totally wrong, and I'd think about, "Well, what's going to happen if I just totally disregard what this person says?" Or "What's going to happen if I just go ahead and do what this person says, and then follow-up with someone that's over her head about how I felt or about how the situation took place and my feelings about it?"

A defensive line of reasoning dominated her thinking. Her overriding concern was how to avoid doing something that she perceived would be wrong, and at the same time, minimize the ongoing conflict with this person. She was powerless to change the situation, but she could change herself in the middle of the conflict.

There was a thread of similar concerns over the changes in Adrienne's area of the college throughout her interview. Her preference was not to resist the change, but to provide feedback within the institution about the negative impact of certain aspects of the change, but there was no mechanism to provide feedback, and feedback was actively discouraged.

It's like people are afraid of--fear of reprisal. No one wants to say what's wrong and try to fix it. If you do, you're complaining. In fact we were told, "If you don't like the job then leave." If people don't like the changes and what's going on they can leave! How does that make you feel?

She was stunned that her only options were to do what she was told or to leave.

This created a tremendous personal struggle for her. "I'm in conflict. And it doesn't feel good. And I feel like I'm screaming internally and no one's hearing that these problems

exist and that we need help with them.” She was in an ongoing challenge to serve the students effectively, within a system that often presented obstacles for students. She believed she had an obligation to make things better for the students, but due to the low level of her position, she was blocked from meaningful channels of input.

In all of these situations, the conflict between personal and institutional values was generally invisible in the workplace, except perhaps in the negative emotions manifested in the behavior of frustrated employees. But when Georgia, a faculty member encountered a similar challenge to her value system, she used the opportunity to teach her students about social justice and civil disobedience.

There was a policy given from on high that there will be no children of any kind on the campus at any time for any reason. And certainly, not only not on the campus, but certainly not in the classroom. Never, ever, ever in the classroom. Now number one, they broke that right away because lots of people come in to pay their money with their kids, so they never did anything about that did they? They want them to come and pay.

Georgia perceived that the administrators developed a policy that was unevenly applied. On the one hand, the ban against children was complete, but an exception was made for students to pay fees in the business office. Her interpretation was that the policy was serving the needs of the institution, at the students’ expense. Most importantly, she saw the ban against children in the classroom as hostile to single parents.

Having been a single parent myself, I know that you can have plan A, plan B, and plan C arranged and they can all fall through and you still have to take that test. And I always tell my students this is a bad rule so I will break it with you. If you need to bring your kid to my classroom you may do so. Please show up, come to school, bring the kid and in my experience over 18 years I have never found that to be a mistake. Never.

Her personal values were in direct conflict with the institution, and she chose to teach the students her way of resolving the conflict. “This is one that I will break with you because

it's a bad rule. So what does Antigone say--Sophocles' Antigone: If it's a bad law what is an ethical person's responsibility?"

She identified with the unmet need of the students. She had been a single parent and felt a closer allegiance to the students who were relatively powerless within the college, than the administration. She felt both a responsibility and a personal sense of agency that she could meet her students at this point of need without jeopardizing academic quality. The protection of tenure allowed her to say, deliberately, that she would break the rule with the students. She was still vulnerable, but she felt strongly enough that this was an act that was worth the risk, and that it was part of her teaching of ethical responsibility that she actually incorporated into her instruction by modeling it for her students. In this way, she was able to maintain her personal sense of congruence in her daily work by detaching from a sense of responsibility to the larger institution.

The policy is downright destructive. It's not only not right, it is destructive! Do we have any chance of getting that feedback heard? No. So what you do is you live with it. You make it as right as you can in your own little corner. Ignore it as much as you can in your own little corner but don't get caught.

She expressed her hopelessness at ever being taken seriously by the people responsible for making the policy. She perceived her job to be an instructor for her students, "in her own little corner, but she did not see any connection with the larger institution where she was voiceless and powerless.

I really did believe at one time that there was a way I could influence the institution in which I worked. I don't believe it anymore. Generally speaking, the attitude that I have and the attitude that I see most in my colleagues, is sort of like the Mesopotamians with their gods. It's like 'O.K. if I behave real well, keep a low profile, the best thing that you can do for me is not notice.

So how did the behavior of Georgia in her job reflect back on the issue of psychological empowerment? She clearly articulated strength and confidence in her

connection within the classroom to her students. That is who she was. But outside that limited sphere, she was openly at odds with the larger institution, using her rapport with the students to encourage them to disconnect as well. She produced traction that had the potential to hinder the organization, but she kept a “low profile” so that her act of sedition would go largely unnoticed.

If they knew who I was, they’d fire me. That’s the way I feel. I also feel like I’m exactly what those kids need and I’m a very good teacher. So I am what they need, they just don’t perceive it that way.

The students needed her for more than just her teaching ability. She had something to offer as a mentor, and she perceived that she filled an important role in her student’s lives. But she was completely at odds with the structure of the organization defined by the administration. She succinctly described completely disconnecting from any temptation to speak her understanding to those who could change the system. “Shut up and shut in.” She was deeply threatened by the administration, and preferred to avoid contact in order to preserve her sense of security in the classroom.

Her experience was echoed by Fred who ran into a conflict with an administrator, but he chose to work directly within the system to try to come to a resolution.

I get a phone call from a vice-president saying, “What the hell are you doing paying people from the foundation to work part-time for you? You can’t do that. It’s in breach of IRS.” I said, “Okay, tell me how I should do it.” “This is the system I inherited. If there’s a problem with it, let’s build a new system. Who do I need to talk to?” Try to diffuse the reactionaryism.”

He avoided expressing his emotions in the moment, but focused his attention on the problem to be solved. “I’d rather be focused on getting the new thing built, the new process, the new whatever. I think that’s how you resolve conflict.” But this strategy had limited effectiveness within the larger sphere in which he operated. He internalized a deeply affecting image of destructive action to which he was witness.

I can remember very clearly being in an advisory committee meeting for this department some years ago, when I was not the director but I was subcommittee chair on the Board of Directors. And the previous incumbent at this position made various statements, ill-considered, about future aspirations, goals, and steps to achieve them, and I saw the tide change in that instant. That person was doomed from that moment on because they were a threat.

The “tide” that changed was the support being withdrawn from that person and the work of the department. He remembered it vividly, because as the result of that one meeting, the person was “doomed,” and the work of the department was drastically curtailed. The failure to adapt within the organizational constraints for the department created the perception of threat by those with supervisory oversight, which resulted in defensive behavior, which ended in the termination of the previous director from her position. “So realize that approach won’t work. You’ve just got to choose your moment to initiate certain things. And anything that smacks of autonomy or separateness is going to be cut down ruthlessly at this college.” His use of destructive language provides a clue to his emotional response to this situation. He was closely allied with this persona as a member of her advisory board. She took a bold stand in a meeting and was “cut down ruthlessly.” “That tells you something about control and the need for control, and anything that’s perceived as a threat for that ultimate control will be dealt with harshly.” His goal once he was given the opportunity to replace the director, was to avoid the same fate by flying under the administrative radar.

And the only entity that’s going to lose is that which is in the firing line, not the person, but who they’re with—the department. So, I’ve got to protect the department, and I don’t want it be vulnerable to hostile intent for whatever reason. In other words, while I could be bold in how I might want to conceive of something, I have to protect the department as an entity independent of myself, just like one gives service to one’s discipline, whatever that is. That’s the ethical thing. If I were to push certain things too quickly at the wrong time, I would put the department at risk.

Fred's real conflict was between a love for his department and any personal ambition he had to create a larger program that was out of alignment with the administrative vision. He recognized that he had the potential for bold action, and perhaps the desire as well, but he was clearly stifled by his memory of the hostile force exerted over the department when administrators perceived a threat to their control. He was stifled, but he willingly chose to operate within the restrictions as an ethical responsibility, in service to the department that fulfilled a greater purpose than his personal ambition.

TC took a somewhat different view of ethical compromise. He described his general satisfaction with the work ethic of people at the college- a very important aspect of the work environment for him.

There are some sharp people here, some of the sharpest people I've worked with and not necessarily just in my area; I'm talking about overall, generally, some real solid people. Good workers, good work ethic, overall disposition, you--when you run into them on campus it's always an enjoyable experience, but somehow their contribution to the organization is not recognized in any way or form.

His challenge in this case was that he perceived that people with power could simply assume credit for the work done by their subordinates, which violated a fundamental value for him.

Not to mention departments, but there's one particular department that I really feel for because there's an individual over there that is constantly busting his back. I mean this guy is... And he is right there... I wouldn't mind having him work for me. Very good work ethic, very focused on detail, very focused on balance.

His feelings were aroused by the hard work of this one person that he had observed. Twice he was at a loss for words as he described the person. "I mean this guy is..." but he did not put it into words what the guy was. "And he is right there..." but he did not put into words what he was doing. He captured the essence of what it meant to him when

he said that he wouldn't mind having him as an employee. He saw the dedication and discipline of this person, but he perceived that his value was unrecognized, and he was concerned for him. He explains his motivation for concern: "Whenever this guy accomplishes something, his supervisor takes all the credit for it." This was TC's statement of the rule that governs the supervisor's behavior. When he saw this occur, he was prepared to be angry, and to fight for the one who was unrecognized. He began the description of his memory of the actual event with an apology.

I'm sorry, the last time that happened I kinda--I didn't fly off the handle, but I kinda--I sent an e-mail back, an e-mail went out congratulating his supervisor and I sent an e-mail back c.c.-ing everybody to him: "Thanks for the hard work. I don't think this could have been done without you. You were the key person in this," and I sent it out to everybody who had been e-mailed on the kudos to his supervisor, including his supervisor and his supervisor's supervisor.

The challenge of this situation was that the employee who was doing the real work would reap none of the benefits of recognition for the high quality work he was doing, but rather the supervisor would grow in his reputation at this person's expense. When he said he "didn't fly off the handle," he indicated that he was aware of how emotionally charged he was at the situation, and how he could have behaved impulsively, yet he handled the situation without expressing his anger directly. Instead he usurped the praise of the supervisor by transferring it to the one who did the work, by letting everyone in the chain of command know about it. He concluded with the moral of his story.

Well, you know, I don't have a problem being controversial. I don't have a problem fighting for the little guy. Maybe that was--my goal when I went to school was to become an attorney and fight for the little guy. Well, that's the little guy, that's the underdog, that's the guy that needs somebody to say: 'Hey, you're doing a good job, and everybody needs to know about it.' That's the individual that's not being recognized in this system, you know? People that are being recognized are always trying to steal the limelight.

He believed that he was a defender of the underdog. His behavior was guided by his belief that “the little guy” needed someone to fight for him and affirm the contribution that he made for the good of the whole. He indicated that he had no problem using his position to stand up for him when he was treated unjustly. What was interesting to note about this sequence was that the pattern of behavior was guided by a rule that dated back to the personal goals of his early life.

Choices and Consequences

An important part of the process of decisionmaking involved the act of choosing and living out the consequences of choices. In the act of living out the consequences of choices, learning was the most consistent benefit. Some participants chose to take a stand and run the risk of paying a high price for personal choice, others learned that there was safety in numbers. The final theme that emerged was that leaders had a major role in creating a context of psychological safety in which it was possible for employees to learn from errors without emotionally threatening negative consequences.

Stephano had been in his position for many years. As the result, he developed a sense of confidence about his expertise in the job.

With everything I’ve learned, if it’s related to my job, you know, I can gather all that input and all that knowledge and information that I’ve acquired over the years and I can, I think, make a pretty good decision about how to do something.

His confidence was circumscribed to his specific job context. But within that sphere of influence, he had confidence that he had learned enough to handle all choices that needed to be made during his years of experience. “I can say, honestly, that in the 16 years I’ve been here I don’t think I’ve caused the college to spend money that they didn’t need to spend because I made a mistake on a certain judgment call.” The litmus test of his value to the institution was that he exhibited good organizational stewardship in his

choices. He never said that he didn't make mistakes, but that his mistakes did not cost the college money.

Similarly, Fred described his pattern of learning over time, which suggested that mistakes had been made, from which learning was the result.

Sometimes we do falter in what we decided to do, but as things evolve--less and less. We understand more and more what our various audiences and constituencies are, and what their needs are, and how best to approach, or satisfy, or otherwise, those.

When he said that sometimes he faltered, this suggested an unsteady hesitation due to relatively poor choices that had been made, rather than outright failure. But from the hesitancy of regrouping from mistakes, professional expertise was nurtured because learning had taken place. In Fred's case, the focus was on responding effectively to different constituencies, rather than financial stewardship.

Another force at work in making choices occurred when people chose to take a stand for a belief. This practice generally involved some level of risk, but the strength of conviction was so important that the risky path was chosen in the hope of arriving at a better outcome. Yvette stood her ground when a student got serious about grieving a failing grade. "One girl went to the college while she was still in high school, and she didn't go to class and she got F's. And I said, 'Well, you didn't go to class. What do you want?'" It was clear that Yvette didn't believe that the student deserved a passing grade because she had not fulfilled the responsibilities for the course. However, the stakes had become very high for the student, and she transferred the pressure to Yvette in the role of the department chair.

She wrote a letter and wanted to get a lawyer involved and all that, and I said, "But you didn't go to class. How do you expect...?" I said, "He can't give you a grade." So I talked to her first. I talked to him. And then I had them to try to talk together, but they didn't even want to talk with each other very well.

Yvette was caught in the crossfire of an emotionally charged situation in which she had authority to do as she thought best. She considered the student's situation.

She decided in midstream that she wanted to go to medical school. I said, "Well, maybe you can get into medical school but, you know, you got those F's there. You just have to work something out. You'll be able to still get into medical school, I'm sure. If not, you know, this is something that you have to deal with."

The responsibility for the problem rested with the student, and so the negative consequence would need to belong to the student as well. "She didn't come to class. I can't have everybody changing a grade, that's not fair." Her decision was final. In this case, taking a stand was a modest risk, even though the student threatened to involve a lawyer. Upholding standards for grades was a longstanding tradition for which there was widespread support.

That was not the case when Wendy took a stand. Her professional expertise created a conflict with her department chair in which she felt very strongly. "I, one time, said that if that's what you want me to do, I'll quit." She was clear that the request had violated her personal standards. "And it was, sure at the moment, probably not taken with a smile, but I meant it." In the light of hindsight, it was clear to Wendy that she had made the right choice, but at the time it was a potentially very costly move. But her guiding value in the situation stood out in clear relief against the backdrop of risk. "You have to take a stand. And I came home and I said to my husband: 'I may not have a job' and he said: 'O.K. We'll work it out.'" She had support where she needed it most in order to be able to follow through on her decision, from her husband. With his support, if she lost her job as a consequence of her decision, she would be able to survive the transition. This was an uncharacteristic move on Wendy's part.

For important decisions, I reflect, I think, I weigh. I'm not a shoot from the hip person--But I was hit by surprise and it was quote unquote a "fait accompli" and so

in that particular time I said “O.K., that’s fine. I won’t be here when you implement it.” But mostly I reflect and think about it and weigh it and try to really look at every single side. And then stand firm.

As the result of her decision to take a stand, she was reinforced in her conviction when her supervisor capitulated and yielded to Wendy’s choice. This was a very empowering moment for Wendy as she advocated for professional standards that were in danger of being eroded, and prevailed.

One interesting element in this data involved Beau evolving in his stand for high performance in this work environment.

There’s so many people that I look around at, and it’s not a challenge. It’s just a job. And if you ask them for something extra, they want more money. They’re not interested in anything other than finishing it and going home exactly on time. And I come from a world and a tradition where if that was how you approached it, you didn’t survive.

He was perplexed by a culture in which the standard on the job was to do only what was minimally required. He was accustomed to competing in order to simply survive, which was unnecessary in this work place.

I do way more than.... Actually at this point I don’t know if I’m doing way more, I generally do way more than what’s required of my position because it annoys me to see things done half-heartedly, or not to the best of my ability.

As he stopped to reflect on his choice to go by a more competitive standard of excelling, he realized that he was no longer as committed to going above and beyond. He described the feeling of being annoyed at doing less than his best.

I come here because they pay me to, but I figure that while I’m here, because they pay me to be here, they’ve earned my attention and I give it to them. I spend my time here working, doing what they hired me to do to the best of my ability, which is sometimes better than they expected. It’s never yet been less than they expected and it’s not that hard. It’s neat being around people whose life function is wrapped up in learning.

As he resolved the inner tension in his evolving value set, the new rule that emerged was that his work was “sometimes better than they expected” and “never yet been less.” He was choosing to adapt to the new culture by maintaining his preference for high performance, in the absence of both demand from a competitive work culture and rewards for excellence.

The process of making choices seemed to take on less of a risk when the consequences for the outcomes were shared with others. Buttress shared the responsibility with his faculty members for making decisions about which needs were most important in the department. The consequence of this decision was a shared sense of ownership for the outcomes. He would start the conversation. “‘Okay, we’re going to discuss the future needs for faculty.’ And we’d go around the table.” He said that he made sure that all of the different groups in his department were represented in the meetings.

And Ralph will say, “You know, we’re running into some difficulty at the Circle campus. We need to have another faculty member in this area.” And then we go around the table, and Bobbi will say, “We’re running into a stone wall in terms of how many courses we can offer because we have a limited number of faculty members at Square campus.”

He created an open environment in which participants were permitted to speak in safety about the needs that they were experiencing in doing the work of the department. This was a very empowering process, which resulted in a high level of consensus among the participants who volunteered to assist in the process. “If we have to ask for that position, what would be the priorities? Which one is the most important? So that we can put it in our planning document as a higher priority.” Not only did he choose to engage them in the process of identifying the needs, but he took it a step farther to also involve them in determining priorities. The risk Buttress took in this process was the risk of

giving up control to the group. The safety of spreading the responsibility for choosing around to the whole group cost him unilateral control of the direction of the department.

Jean also emphasized the issue of safety in making choices. "I've been under two different supervisors since I've been here, and both of them provided a very strong safety net." The safety net involved choosing who would be held responsible when the consequences of decisions were costly.

I made it very clear to both of them that I would not ask for them to step in and help me unless I really felt it was necessary. That I would try and make decisions myself and take not necessarily the heat but, you know, but resolve things at my own level and in my own realm as much as possible. But there would be occasions where I would need their support and their intervention. And they know that when I come to them and say, "Can you intervene on this?" that I really do need it. And generally, they recognize that it's not a decision that needs to be made at my level. It's a decision that needs to be made at their level.

The issue of the level at which decisions were made was an important element in psychological empowerment. As Jean described, she was willing and able to make decisions in her "own realm as much as possible." She was also clear about her limits and boundaries. When a decision involved authority that was not within her scope, she would ask for help. Her safety net provided freedom to ask for help without fear, which allowed her to operate in her job with confidence.

Again, a key statement made by Sam brings out the idea of creating a work environment of psychological safety built on the foundation of choices and consequences.

In a learning organization the reality comes that the vice president doesn't necessarily know the best way to do a small procedure in the registration office, and should not have to sign off on that procedure. He or she should certainly empower that decision to be made at the lowest position possible and realize that if there's an error made that you fix it, but you don't shoot John.

As articulated by Stephano and Fred, learning took place as people were given authority to make decisions, with a safety net to catch them in the event of an error. Over time,

expertise resulted from employees who exercised responsible authority, like Jean, within the appropriate sphere of influence. As the organization pushed decision-making to the lowest level possible, control was also released over the decisions, as exemplified by Buttress and his faculty decisionmaking. The biggest challenge represented in this data emerged from the observation of Beau. If people were not motivated to excel because “it’s just a job,” there was no benefit to taking the risk of making decisions that may have produced an undesirable consequence.

Making Connections

A lot of the behavior of people in this college revolved around making connections with other people. There were several references, particularly among faculty, regarding connections with a professional discipline. And administrators tended to make connections as a way to advance the work of the college. The most emotionally charged group of responses revolved around creating attachment bonds.

Both Jane and Wendy appeared to be somewhat detached from much of the activity of the college, preferring to operate largely in the cloister of the local professional community. Jane referred to it as her informal network.

One of the things that I do is use informal networks. Sometimes the formal ones work, and sometimes they don’t. I’m certainly going to ask for help, or at least let the chair or the dean know what I’m doing, but I utilize my informal networks a lot. You know, people that have known me for a while, or know of me, that I call up and say, “Hey, I really need a favor. Can you come fix this for me,” or “Show me how to do this?”

The formal chain of command did not meet her needs well, so she developed an alternative group of people whom she trusted in order to draw on their expertise in times of need. Similarly, Wendy was clear that she did not actively contribute in college-wide committees, preferring to focus on the needs of her students and her profession. “I don’t

really actively contribute. I'm not very involved in the college-wide committees and things like that. I have very little interest in it. At all. You know, it's like I'm not a meeting person." The kinds of connections that were to be made in meetings were of no use to her.

I'm doing something that's kind of larger and it really reflects on this department. Programs like ours have to be accredited by the professional accrediting body, and I recently became an accreditor. So I go around to other colleges in the country when they're up for accreditation and I bring back *great* information to our program. Plus, we are now preparing for our accreditation in October so this all helps.

The value of making connections outside the college for the purpose of learning how to improve her program prompted her to expend a great deal of energy to go through the process of becoming an accreditor. She was pragmatic in restricting her activities to making connections that would enhance her work with students. Similarly, Fred described his connections with the larger world of his discipline in intimate terms. "Actually, we've got close relationships. Yes, it's a club, it's a village, you know, a diffuse village. The creative world. The creative academic world." He expressed his professional connection in community terms. He was very closely aligned with this world, and drew his identity largely from the standards of his profession, rather than from the college where he was in residence. His motive in establishing connections was to promote a center of excellence as an act of service for students to whom he was primarily responsible.

At the other end of the spectrum were the administrators who operated from insulated layers within the hierarchy of the college away from daily contact with students. Jean viewed her job in ideal terms. "I see my role as making dreams happen, you know? The dreams of people that work here and that fits in with the mission of the college." She

played a very important supportive role in the institution, and her job was to commit to and support the larger purposes of the college by promoting the alignment of others in the college community. She would actively seek out opportunities to be in contact with a wide range of people who would see her as a supporter and a go-to person.

I ask a lot of questions. Listen a lot. I attend a wide variety of meetings. I try and participate in different activities. I get my staff to participate in a lot of different things that are going on on campus so that we get to know people at all levels and get on a basis where they will come to us with an idea and say, “You know, you know, I’d really like to be able to do this for my students.”

She expressed a sense of herself in this role of a confident woman with a high level of expertise and a very positive purpose. She was an ambassador of goodwill could make dreams happen to support the mission of the college.

Just to see that other parts of the college and the campus is what makes me a good ambassador of the college, because the more I know about it and the more I appreciate what a great place it is and what it does have to offer, the more I can contribute to the goals.

She viewed her job as seeking out a broad array of connections as an opportunity to foster appreciation of the college as an institution, and to champion the goals of the administration. The question that came to mind was how she might support the dreams of her coworkers, Adrienne and Georgia. Did she understand the needs encountered within the different divisions charged with serving the students directly?

We do make a formal effort once a year in my department to go around and speak to each academic unit on the campus and say, ‘What do you see happening in your area?’ or, ‘Do you see growth happening? Do you have some specific needs? Are there some areas that you want to change or evolve into? And what would you need to do that?’ Another way we use, you know, we go around sometimes and we’ll say, ‘If I handed you a check for \$100,000, what would you do with it?’”

Her “formal effort” to reach out to all of the academic units each year provided her with access primarily to the leaders of the units, and the active members who were not trying to stay off the radar. By staying within the formal hierarchy of the college she was

insulated from the members of the institution who served at the boundary level. These two groups, frontline workers and top administrators, appeared to be polarized within exclusive sub-group interactions that disconnected the resources that each could bring to the other. Jean's positive approach to building a smooth-functioning system was echoed by Sam, the vice-president in her area, when he said, "I try to build relationships, and try to build win-win situations. I do a lot of things behind the scenes." Both Sam and Jean emphasized the major task in their work was building positive relationships in service to administrative goals. The principle that guided Sam was that his efforts were focused on what was appropriate for the college. His belief in the value of the college mobilized him to go from person to person to persuade people to do what he wanted them to do in service to the higher purpose of the college. Sam demonstrated caring about both the college and the people within it. He said that he worked hard to be attentive to the opinions of different constituencies, but his primary connections were made with the leaders in upper administration who focused on large systemic issues.

As a long time leader among the faculty, Buttruss had an opportunity to make connections with a large array of people at the college over the many years of his employment.

I have been privileged to chair and serve on many committees, and it's, I think, through active involvement that you find out about how the college operates, because if you have a leadership role in the college, then you have to talk to people, people who know something about the budget or something about academic affairs or something about public relations. And as you go through in the role of either committee chair or chair of College Council and you get to talk to the presidents or the vice presidents or the deans, you get a sense of how college works, what kind of information you need to make good decisions, because you see how other people have made decisions based on information.

In recent years his main associations had been with administrators and the faculty in his department. He became skilled in coaxing valuable resources out of the college

budget year after year because he learned how the process worked through his solid network of connections. He was clear that his motive wasn't just to gather the most resources, but he operated out of a deep ethical sense of responsibility to fellow faculty.

It's like people that are getting ready to retire, they say, "Well, I'm in my last year. I don't have to do anything. Just let me collect my paycheck and go home." That's not the way I think. I think that if I'm a senior professor, I have an obligation to lead other faculty by example.

His sense of personal responsibility engaged him in a collegial planning process with his department and motivated him to take on multiple leadership roles over the years as an act of service to the institution.

Two examples of creating attachment bonds were found in the stories of Adrienne and Georgia. As related previously, both drew a great deal of satisfaction from their connections with students and both identified more with the students than with members of the college community, particularly those in leadership positions.

When students come back and tell me that I really helped them, and I didn't think that I did anything special for them. And they come back and specifically say, 'You indirectly or directly helped me the other day. That something you said or did.' And that really feels good to know that somehow I touched them and I helped them in a positive way.

Her allegiance was clear. She was validated by her connection with the students who perceived that she made a difference to them in a way that was very immediate and personal. Similarly, Georgia, a faculty member, seemed to draw her personal sense of validation from the students. She captured it best when she said, "I feel very confident and happy in the classroom. I feel in control of my classroom." The source of her confidence, once again, was the feedback that she received from the direct beneficiaries of her work. "I think that the students love me because they know I love them and, so

we're just very comfortable together." She was strengthened by the bond with her students, and happy to be able to serve as a role model.

I just recently asked my department head to get me to the 35 and above pay level because I have no trouble controlling a large classroom. And that just comes. I'm very much go with the flow kind of modify your strategy based upon the incoming. So it's always a give and take as a constant free exchange between me and my students.

An interesting challenge that arose from these two accounts was the gap between the affirmation that both women received from their bond with the students who engaged them daily, and the confrontational challenge from administrative people who communicated at a psychological distance removed from the direct input of the students from deeper levels within the college. The closeness of the bond with students exerted a clear influence over who was more likely to gain their attention and support.

Value-added Dimensions of Psychological Empowerment

While this study has endeavored to explore the attributes of psychological empowerment, it would not be complete without also underscoring the positive contributions made to organizational functioning as the result of psychological empowerment. Starting with Menon's model, this typology of psychological empowerment involved three necessary cognitive components: perceived competence, perceived control and goal internalization. In this chapter, three additional components have been added to clarify the dynamic processes that mediate those three elements in this institution: learning, decision-making, and trusting.



Figure 5-1: Dynamic Model of Psychological Empowerment

In this final section, one additional component will be explored: the value-added dimensions of psychological empowerment. Three dimensions of this component that appear to emerge through the activation of psychological empowerment are responsible action, valued expertise, and commitment to a higher purpose.

Responsible Action.

As the reciprocal process of learning mediated the cognitive components of competence and control, the fruit expressed in this interplay of strengths was responsible action on the part of the employee on behalf of the college. Simply stated by Samantha, “I’m pretty much a self-starter, and I know if I have a job to get done or to do, I get it done.” As a self-starter, she had control over her work. She was the active agent in knowing what needed to be done and exercised her competence to do it. This is the core element of the value-added dimension of responsible action in its simplest form.

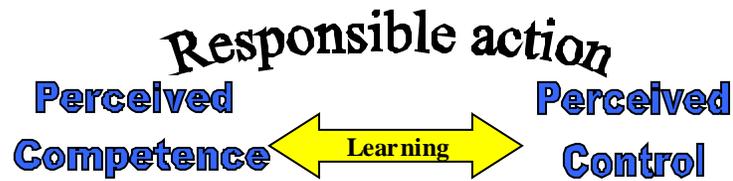


Figure 5-2: Value-added Dimension of Responsible Action

Ashley took it a step farther as she interacted with the people that she supervised to model responsible action.

I'm here to contribute to the college in whatever needs to be done. And so I feel like that's helped me a lot. People see that and say, "No, she's not up there in this ivory tower. She's willing to pitch in and do what needs to be done." And you get a sense of backing from people when you're not up above them, but you're one of them. You know, they're willing to support you and back you.

When she said that she was "willing to pitch in and do what needs to be done," she was indicating that she set the example for others of doing what needed to be done. As the result, she perceived that others in her unit followed suit. The exercise of competence under control, mediated by active learning through modeling produced responsible action as the members of this department would "do what needs to be done."

Similarly, Fred consciously chose to create a learning environment for the junior staff members who might not understand what was involved in accomplishing the tasks set before the department.

Try to lay out for everybody involved what's at stake and what the consequences are for a particular approach; what they can yield, what the yield can be from doing something a certain way or tackling something. We've got a lot of staff here that need a lot of supervision because they're junior staff.

Rather than dictating the terms to the junior staff, he tried to promote learning that would enhance their competence through understanding of the consequences of various courses of action.

I try to make it a learning environment for them by explaining the rationale so that not only do they understand, “Well, gee, if we don’t do this this week, we’ll cause a problem,” but the entire problem-solving mentality and methodology is something you can impart to another as well. You should model, you know, an approach that can be a learning situation for a junior staff member or student.

The exercise of control in this case was mediated through explaining and imparting knowledge of problem solving, so that the members of his staff would grow in competence as well as enhanced control by enlarging their sphere of self-determination through ownership.

Wendy created a similar opportunity for learning in her department, but rather than create a learning environment for subordinates, she used her skills as a researcher to stimulate learning for the leaders in her department to promote movement toward change. Her course of action began with an intuitive hunch rooted in her knowledge of the students.

I felt that the students needed to do these particular hands on skills that they were not having been allowed to do. I felt that was outdated and I felt they could do it. So I researched the process to see if other schools and other students were doing it and then went to our business partner and I got their policy and I wrote my own policy and then I presented it to the committee. And it was (*snap*) accepted like that.

She exercised her competence as a researcher to check out her hunch with competitors in the marketplace, as well as with their local partner in the profession. Her hunch was confirmed that this was a positive course of action for the institution, so she exercised control by writing her own policy. The interesting transaction that occurred next was that she took the knowledge that she acquired upward to the decision-makers and persuaded them to change the policy in order to stay up to date and maintain competitiveness. Her professional competence provided her with the foundation of

knowledge necessary to challenge the status quo, which suggests that there is a proactive component of responsible action.

This proactive component was explored earlier in this study through the planning process used by Buttruss in his department. He orchestrated a comprehensive process with his department for promoting active engagement of a representative team of volunteers to study the needs of all faculty members as a foundation for responsible action of the group. He described how unusual it was in the college for people to go above and beyond in their work like he observed with the members of his planning team.

We had a planning document long before anybody said we had to have one. I have people who come in and sit down around this table on a Friday. It's amazing, because you look around this campus, and at three o'clock Friday afternoon, it's like deserted. And I get people who come and sit in this room from two to five and work on a planning document. And part of that planning document, part of what they are charged with doing, is not only setting a direction for the department, but they are also charged with helping me prioritize items for budgeting purposes.

The members of his department volunteered to participate in researching the needs of all members of the larger group, and then represented the priorities to the group as they considered together the forward movement of the department as a whole. Buttruss characterized the thinking process in this way. "If we have to ask for that position, what would be the priorities? Which one is the most important? So that we can put it in our planning document as a higher priority than maybe another one." But just researching, thinking and discussing were not the only strategies used in this decision-making process of the group. Buttruss described how members of the group exercised responsible judgment in challenging the interests of individuals in favor of the larger concerns of the group.

And they get all this kind of wish list stuff, and they come in and we sit down and we talk about each item. "Oh, I talked to this faculty member, and this is really needed because this is the direction they want to go with the course, okay?" And

then somebody will say, “Yeah, but this is, boy, this is a pretty esoteric piece of equipment, you know. They’d like it because it’s a toy for them.” And I’ve heard this kind of conversation.

When Buttruss indicated that some of the wishes of the members of the faculty were played down as “toys,” there was also a trend described in which even these minor interests were respected and retained for consideration in the final planning document.

So, when we go around the table, and we talk like that, then the next step is, “Okay, let’s put it in priority. We’re not going to take away the toy, but does it deserve to be high on the priority list or low on the priority list?” And then we prioritize every item on that list that came in.

Rather than dismiss wishes that might be considered esoteric, they were still honored as legitimate interests of peers, but relegated to lower priority in the larger system of the departmental needs for educating students. Buttruss served as monitor of the process.

“My part in it would be to say, just as we would with faculty, ‘Do we really need this?’”

As the leader of the group, the more the group assumed a course of responsible action, the less he would have to exercise authority.

And then the other thing we talk about is, “Okay, I got this request for somebody from North Campus for this piece of equipment, because they want to insert this into their course.” And invariably, I don’t even have to bring it up, somebody will say, “Well, we teach that same course at every other campus. Are we going to do that at every campus so that we have a uniformity of instruction?” And they will say, “Well, maybe we ought to table this until we talk to the other instructors.” And if we’re not going to do it at all campuses, then probably we shouldn’t be doing it at this campus. And if we are going to do it at all campuses, then this little piece of equipment, we don’t need one of them, we need four of them, one for each campus. So, that’s the kind of banter that goes on in here, and it’s amazing.

As innovation attracted the attention of the early adopters, other members of the group appeared to have been less attuned to changes in technology. By drawing new knowledge of innovation into the planning group where it could be discussed and then circulated out among all members of the department at different campuses, the process could stimulate adoption of innovation across all members. This became possible because

the leader, Buttruss, promoted the diffusion of responsible action among all members of the planning group. “I facilitate that. I don’t have anything to do once that’s over with. I don’t touch it, okay?” When he indicated that he didn’t have anything to do with it once it was over, he was pointing to an attitude of detachment from his right as the department chair to pursue his own agenda, in favor of subordinating his interests to the wisdom of informed decision-making by the group.

Earlier, Sam articulated the basic responsibility of the college. “We educate students.” And then he went on to describe the principle of responsible action enacted by each of these empowered members of this college community. “They are positive about it; they are doing it in the very best fashion that they can and just as they are educating the students, they're also educating themselves.” This is a core manifestation of psychological empowerment.

In sum, the competence of members who demonstrated the first value-added dimension of psychological empowerment, responsible action, was reflected in their knowledge of their profession, both internally as practiced in the college, and externally, as the professional discipline evolved outside the boundaries of the college, and their willingness to share their knowledge in order to promote forward thinking through increased understanding and problem-solving among others within their sphere of influence. Elements of control which contributed to the learning and responsible action of others included modeling, explaining, both in writing and orally, and personal drive toward attaining excellence.

Valued Expertise

The fruit of perceived control aligned with organizational goals mediated by decision-making produced the second value-added dimension of valued expertise.

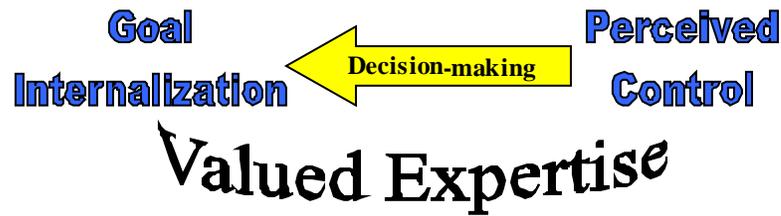


Figure 5-3: Value-added Dimension of Valued Expertise

As employees were empowered with both the responsibility for making decisions, and living with the consequences of those decisions, the outcome was increased expertise as they learned by experience over time. For example, Jean described the reaction of other people at the college toward her work.

They'll say, "Well, you know, I know a little bit, but you have 20 years experience in this field," and so I think that I'm empowered from that regard. You know, just because people do recognize that I have some skills and some experience and abilities that they may not have had the opportunity to develop in their professional life.

Her 20 years of experience had given her the opportunity to develop her abilities to a level of expertise that others acknowledged and respected. Similarly, Stephano acquired expertise as the result of his years of work in the college.

I think the empowerment for me comes with the knowledge that I've got from what I've learned from over the years here at the college; the opportunity the college has given me, and I use the college as a whole, because I work with many different people.

The expertise he has acquired helped him to understand the college as a whole. But it was rooted in his connection with people who in turn connected him with the specific knowledge he needed to be of value in this particular context. Control aligned with the goals of the organization was necessarily context specific.

Some of the people that worked here gave me the opportunity, gave me the information that I needed when I needed it, were willing to work with me and take

me under their wing, and help me grow to be the person that I am today. I'm still always trying to get better, which I think everybody is trying to get better in some way, shape, or form.

The valued expertise of this institution was situation-specific, which was why it had taken time to develop for these two employees. Stephano had been nurtured and fostered in developing the strengths that were valued by the people in this particular college. Over time he had been rewarded for doing some things very well, which is why he continued to strive to improve, and also believed that others also tried to improve.

I've been involved in interviews. Anybody that you bring in from the outside has a great learning curve of how we operate and not just getting to know the right people. I mean, 'cause like I said, I might need to call Bob Jones who works in the accounting department or who do I talk to in I.S.? When I have a computer problem, who do I go to? I mean, I know who to go to if I have a problem. I can walk over there.

New employees might have secured a position with the college due to the skills and abilities that they would bring in to enrich the institution, but they would be expected to lack the institutional knowledge that permitted them to be fully actualized through alignment with the inner working of the institution.

For example, TC described a situation that occurred when he was new in the institution. He knew a lot about his profession, but he didn't know the specific software used by the college. What he brought to the experience of negotiating the gap in his knowledge was a resourcefulness that permitted him to acquire the needed expertise to be effective in this context, without also creating a lag in his productiveness on the job.

My training on that software involved a disk, a CD with disk, a CD-ROM or whatever you want to call it, and two days of looking at the disk on the screen. I didn't have the luxury of going to two weeks of training. To be honest with you I rather do it that way than go sit in a classroom for two weeks knowing that the work is piling up on my desk, knowing that I've gotta get things done.

In that way he was able to acquire the expertise that increased his value to the institution, without sacrificing a substantial amount of time to do it. It was important to him as a high performing professional to immediately produce evidence of his value to the institution.

In TC's case, however, the chiaroscuro of valued expertise was highlighted. It was clearly expected that newcomers could not be knowledgeable about the institution in a short period of time, so when he brought forth institutional knowledge that revealed an extremely high level of insight and knowledge, it was rejected as an impossibility. He was ostracized as well for somehow violating institutional norms for newcomers.

Y'all told me I was out of place. And being here for two weeks, how could I make a judgment call that fast in only two weeks of being in a place when I wasn't even totally acclimated to the system?

Even though he was truly knowledgeable, and even though his knowledge was validated in time, it was initially rejected because of the mental model held by his supervisor that valued expertise must develop slowly over time as one is acculturated to the deeper workings of the institution.

Commitment to a Higher Purpose

Returning again to Sam's articulation of the goals for this institution to become a learning organization, he explained in an earlier section that "there is one goal that everyone had at the institution and that was for the best of the institution." The third value-added dimension of commitment to a higher purpose emerged when the competence of each individual member was energized and mobilized to productive action by the larger purpose of the college.

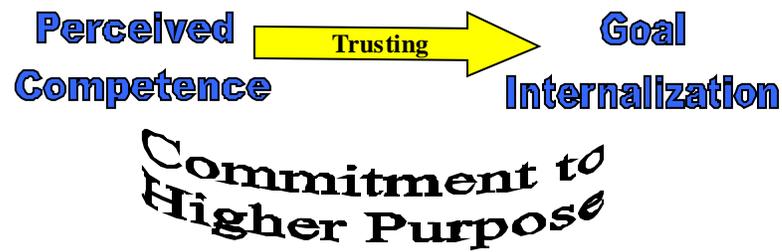


Figure 5-4: Value-added Dimension of Commitment to Higher Purpose

The collective commitment of the entire group could accomplish more than any individual member. Fred described this value-added dimension succinctly when he said,

Committing to something bigger and more important to oneself is a liberating act, in my opinion and gives your efforts more meaning. So, I like to see what the goals of the college are, and I like to see what we can do, and therefore what I can do, to help bring about what we can do to work for the college, you know?

The college benefited as each individual's work aligned with the college goals, and the person was fully committed to mobilizing their best efforts on behalf of the mission of the college through the work assigned within their individual unit.

Here's what we need to have accomplished by then. This is where we're at. These are the variables. This is why we need to do this this week not next week, because next week this is happening, et cetera. So it's a kind of planning, and it works very well for them because people are most able and willing to commit effort and intelligence when they know it makes a difference.

As an administrator, it was Fred's responsibility to communicate his vision for the unfolding of work in his area, so that each and all of the members of his work group could participate with full knowledge of the importance of their part in making the pieces of the whole fit together in a timely fashion. The most important aspect of the planning Fred described was the communication of a vision that gave meaning to the activities of the employees.

When employees were separated from knowledge about the larger working of the college, they tended to lack the willingness to commit their energy as completely as when they understood why they were asked to do certain things, or what purpose their efforts served in the grand scheme of things. Adrienne struggled with the negative feedback of the “little yellow stickies” on her work, because she didn’t understand why her office was being singled out for such scrupulous attention to detail. No one had explained the changes in the larger system that made that attention to detail so important. The result was frustration and negative energy circulating in the office among the members of the group. But no one had to tell her why it was important to help students. She had worked in the institution for many years, developing a high level of expertise in responding to the needs of students. She knew that this was the core mission for both herself and the college. “We both want what’s best for the student.” She was fully committed to serving the needs of the student before her, but because she did not always have appropriate knowledge of the intentions of the larger system with regard to the path of the student, sometimes her loyalties were more closely aligned with the immediate world of the student, than the somewhat distant, or unknown needs of the institution.

What is my role in helping to achieve it? Well, like I said, by serving students to the best of my ability. Empower them and, like I said, make their experience here a positive one. Just to do all we can to help them in the beginning when they come in.

But her knowledge and competence in fulfilling the nuances of detailed paperwork required by the larger system was limited due to faulty lines of communication that weakened alignment.

They assume that we know what we should know. And that’s very dangerous because, I mean just the simplest things that we would go over in training- simple, simple things- people wouldn’t know about. Or they assumed we just knew it. Or people who have been here 20 years knew it. And they didn’t know it.

Adrienne was committed to the higher purpose of serving the expressed needs of the students as she worked with them, but once again, the shadows of darkened communication hindered her from perceiving some of the needs of the institution. In those areas, she was misaligned and unresponsive because she was unaware of what the real interests of the college were. And she was not alone in her confusion. In an institution as large as this college, maintaining a tight alignment with all employees was a major challenge, but as Bucky described it, this was a key to fostering commitment to a higher purpose, the final element of the value-added dimension of psychological empowerment.

I think that my role is pretty much like everyone else's in the college: to functionally do your position to the best of your ability and up to, and maybe even exceed, the standard. And if everybody does that, that will drive this institution forward.



Figure 5-5: Value-added Model: Dynamic of Psychological Empowerment

In sum, these three value-added dimensions of responsible action, valued expertise and commitment to a higher purpose formed the basis of positive institutional outcomes when employees manifested the attributes of psychological empowerment.

Empowerment as explored in this study was expressed in a social context. It was fundamentally the exercise of psychological freedom to choose; to decide how to respond or act or be in this place at this time. The psychological experience of empowerment was not something that existed in reality as an object to be grasped and manipulated in order to examine it from different angles. Rather it was the fruit of each individual's sustained encounter in the matrix of the cultural context of this particular organization. It emerged from a vital, reciprocal influencing process in which the pre-existing psychological make-up of the employee interacted with the situations and people of the institution in a dynamic process of change and organizational evolution.

In Chapter 6, the quantitative and qualitative findings of this study are integrated within a framework that illuminates the construct of psychological empowerment emerging from this empirical data, with recommendations for further research.

CHAPTER 6 DISCUSSION OF THE DYNAMIC OF PSYCHOLOGICAL EMPOWERMENT

“Only one who devotes himself to a cause with his whole strength and soul can be a true master. For this reason mastery demands all of a person.” Albert Einstein (1938, p.78)

Evident from this study is that psychological empowerment is not a static cognitive state or a fixed attribute, but rather a dynamic process of human engagement in adaptation to changing environmental contingencies. The cognitive state of psychological empowerment that might exist at any given moment for a particular individual could be succinctly described by Menon’s three components of perceived competence, perceived control, and goal internalization (2001). However, as circumstances change, and different psychological resources are tapped to respond adaptively to novel circumstances, this state is vulnerable to a wide range of changes, as the cognitions regarding each component are subject to change. In order for psychological empowerment to be a durable human capacity, it must enhance the capacity of both the individual and the organization of which the individual is a part to adjust effectively in response to changing environmental contingencies.

In the first section of this chapter, the definitions of the three components of Menon’s quantitative measure of psychological empowerment will be explored and clarified from the findings of the qualitative data in this study. The cognitions that might contribute to each domain will be articulated. In the second section, the interaction among the three components will be clarified in a model of the dynamic process of psychological empowerment. Finally, recommendations for further research will be

suggested to clarify additional issues related to psychological empowerment in the community college workplace.

Interpretation of Quantitative Results

The quantitative data collected in response to Menon's Empowerment Scale provided a snapshot of the institutional response to the subscale items related to perceived control, perceived competence, and goal internalization, with a summative output of responses that were determined by Menon to reflect the construct of psychological empowerment. Examination of the patterns that emerged from quantitative data analysis revealed three trends that were unlikely to have occurred by chance.



Figure 6-1: Menon's Typology of Psychological Empowerment

First, between the two distinct groups of LCP participants and non-participants, the most notable difference for participants in the program was a stronger alignment with organizational goals reflected in the scores of the Goal Internalization scale. This was an expressed purpose of the LCP, and therefore suggested a satisfactory program outcome in this area. Thomas and Velthouse (1990) had predicted that psychological empowerment could be deliberately cultivated by leadership development. Foster-Fishman and Keys

(1997) indicated that the interests of the individual and the organization could be aligned through involvement and interaction, which was validated by this outcome.

Second, participants endorsed items that reflected a significant pattern of lower scores on items on the Perceived Competence scale than members of the college community who were not participants in the LCP. This is in direct contrast to Sam's statement that "the goal was to spread the knowledge around the organization that there are people out there with broad skills." If the participants were less likely to perceive their own competence, it would be difficult to spread that knowledge around. However, the slight decline in confidence reflected in the lower scores of participants compared to non-participants might reflect the opening of the window of awareness for LCP participants into a larger view of the institution. Perkins (1995) indicated that individual consciousness-raising was the first step in the process of developing an empowered organization. The change of perspective might have destabilized the status quo of self-confidence. As a brief snapshot, the quantitative data is silent with regard to the larger process that may have been set in motion by the LCP. This bears out the findings of Foster-Fishman, et al (1998) who indicated that measurement instruments would be limited due to the inability to capture the full representation of psychological empowerment as it develops over time in a complex organization.

Finally, both administrators and professional employees exhibited a stronger pattern of perceived control than any other groups. It was reasonable to expect that administrators who hold institutional authority to make decisions would exhibit a stronger sense of perceived control. The core problem in the implementation of empowerment initiatives, according to Potterfield (1999), still revolves around the

paradox of power relations in which those in power retain the right to control organizational activity. And professionals, by virtue of the focus within the job on professional expertise, would also tend to be accorded a greater measure of control within this particular work environment. This validates the findings of Foster-Fishman and Keys (1997) who indicated that power to control was a necessary pre-condition of self-efficacy.

Clarification of Components of Psychological Empowerment

While Menon identified a single cognition that expressed each of the sub-components of psychological empowerment, the qualitative findings of this study provide evidence for a greater complexity that underlies each of the components of this construct. Perkins (1995) built a case for the need to explore the underlying tensions associated with empowerment through both quantitative and qualitative means since neither alone provides a full representation of the construct. This was also corroborated by Foster-Fishman, et al (1998) when they indicated that qualitative study of psychological empowerment would provide a truer picture of the richly textured social reality within organizational life.

Perceived Competence

In Chapter 1 of this study, perceived competence was defined as the internal self-appraisal by an individual that one is able to do tasks or gain abilities needed, toward which they are motivated by means of effort (Bandura, 1997; Spieker & Hinsz, 2004). Menon articulated the cognition associated with perceived competence as, "I have the personal competence to do my work." When this subscale was administered to the total group of respondents, representing all levels of employees in this college, and representing both participants and non-participants of the LCP, the mean of the entire

group and all subgroups was above 17 on an 18-point scale. As a simple enactment of the cognition “I have the personal competence to do my work,” it appeared from the quantitative data alone that this was a group of employees with a highly developed sense of perceived competence. However, the dimension reflected in the quantitative data of perceived competence emerged as only a single component of a multidimensional construct, corresponding to the ability to perform required tasks adequately. Although a very necessary aspect of the construct, it was not sufficient to explain the complex psychological experience of perceived competence. As enacted in this environment, five distinct components of perceived competence emerged: adequate job knowledge, the ability to learn what is not known or is changing, the ability to perform required tasks adequately, social validation of contribution to the organization, and person-job match.

Adequate job knowledge consists of an individual knowing what is needed to be able to respond successfully to the challenges encountered on a daily basis within a specific job setting. This is similar to the dimension of personal mastery described by Thomas and Velthouse (1990). In this study, individuals who were relatively new in a job, or who were part of an organizational unit undergoing significant changes, tended to express discomfort with the awareness that they did not know what was needed to perform adequately. This generally reflected a departure from the previous employment condition in which they believed they had a greater measure of confidence in their abilities. In response to this challenge, energy was mobilized to respond to the new situation. Sometimes the energy involved positive emotions that moved a person toward successful adaptation through learning, and sometimes the energy involved negative emotions in defense or resistance to change. A cognition that might be associated with

this component of perceived competence would be “I know what I need to know.”

However, as a dynamic process, the challenge to adjust the perception of competence to cope with novel circumstances would involve an openness to inquiry in order to adapt to changing contingencies. “Do I know what I need to know?” would be a more adaptive cognition to describe this component of perceived competence.

If the answer to the first curious cognition is “I do not know what I need to know,” and the employee’s sense of perceived competence is tilted out of balance, as in the case of the LCP participants, the psychologically empowered response is to mobilize resources in support of the ability to learn what is needed that is not known or is changing in order to restore the sense of balance to the ability to know what is needed to do the job.

Therefore, the capacity to learn is the primary process associated with enhancing perceived competence. By means of learning, an individual can continue to preserve a sense of perceived competence by adjusting to changing environmental contingencies. The adaptive cognition associated with this element is “Can I learn what I don’t know?”

The ability to perform required tasks adequately is a separate experiential component of perceived competence that is based first on self-appraisal of the skill with which a job must be performed. This component of perceived competence is tied deeply to an individual’s identity and self-awareness, and personal self-evaluative cognitions exemplified by the question, “Can I do my job effectively?”

Self-knowledge does not emerge in a vacuum of isolated experience of the self, but is socially constituted through interaction. Social validation of an individual’s contribution to the organization emerged as another aspect of appraisal of perceived competence. This is very similar to the domain of socio-political support identified by

Foster-Fishman, et al (1998). By means of feedback from a variety of others in the context, the validity of an individual's cognitions of job skills were tested. All feedback was not accorded equal weight. Feedback from different sources in the environment varied in congruence with one another, as well as with self-appraisal, which introduced potential for doubt. Various factors that influenced the valuing process for receiving feedback included, the openness to receive the feedback, the willingness to believe the person who gave the feedback, the presence of corroborating or disconfirming evidence, and the power of the individual providing feedback. The degree of variance between an individual's perception of job competence and environmental feedback provides the gestalt response to the third question, "Do others recognize my competence?"

The final aspect of personal competence involved the person-job match. In this area, there appeared to be evidence of a curvilinear relationship in the match between a person's breadth of competencies that they desired to express through work, and those tapped by a position. The narrower the range of personal competencies tapped by a particular job, and the broader the range of competences underutilized within the individual doing the job, the weaker the match between the individual and the job. Conversely, the less able an individual was to perform the competencies required by a job, the weaker the match between the person and the job. Stability and healthy growth emerged from the satisfactory fit between an individual and the demands of a job reflected this dimension of perceived competence. The adaptive cognition that emerges to reflect this area within the domain of perceived competence is "Am I capable of more?"

Perceived Control

Perceived control referred to the private perception of self-determination in an individual's work role, in which the person was able to influence the outcomes of her or

his action in a way that was personally desirable (Bandura, 1997; Menon, 2001).

According to Menon, the cognition associated with perceived control is, "I have control over my work and work context." As encountered in the data set for this study, perceived control involved five distinct components: sphere of influence, acquisitiveness, motivation to engage in job performance, prioritization power for tasks, and awareness of how the individual job related to the larger whole of which it is a part.

Sphere of influence referred to the interdependence of jobs within the larger system of the college. Few jobs at any level within the organization were totally isolated and self contained, but relied on a distributed network of others along the way in a reciprocal give and take of shared organizational resources of knowledge, effort, time, money, information, or other more concrete resources. The cognition associated with adapting effectively to this component of control involved awareness of, "Am I able to influence the others who affect what I need to do my job?"

Acquisitiveness involved the individual's ability to extract appropriate resources from the institution in order to skillfully perform the required tasks of the job. The cognition associated with this component of control is, "Can I acquire the skills and resources needed to do my job?"

Motivation to engage in job performance had to do with the ticklish issue of personal volition. For a variety of reasons, individuals varied in the degree to which the will to do a particular job was fully actualized. However, it was clear that if one lacked the will to perform the job, resistance was likely to increase over time, along with negative emotions, which diminished control over satisfactory outcome. The cognition associated with this component of control is, "Do I want to do my job?"

Prioritization power for tasks involved the freedom to decide what tasks needed to be done at any given moment. This involved control over the use of time and energy, as well as sharing control with other individuals within the system with whom interdependencies existed. The cognition associated with this component of control is, “How do I prioritize what needs to be done?”

Awareness of how the individual job related to the larger organization emerged from involvement in a coherent network of relationships with reciprocal interdependence. The more the terms of the job were dictated by factors outside the frame of individual understanding of job performance, and the less input the individual provided to the larger system, the weaker the sense of control. The cognition associated with this component of control is, “Can I understand how my job is interconnected with the college as a whole?”

Goal Internalization.

Goal internalization was defined as the individual alignment of personal goals with the larger organizational goals that fostered the commitment of energy toward goals that were personally meaningful (Thomas & Velthouse, 1990). In the view of Menon, goal internalization is reflected by the cognition, “I am personally energized by the goals of the organization.” Results of this study suggest that goal internalization involved four distinct components: role identification, knowledge of organizational goals, task differentiation, and collaborative integration.

Role identification involved the degree to which the individual identified with the purpose of the job they were performing. In some cases there was a discrepancy between the expectation for the role of the administrators who were responsible for oversight and the employee who fulfilled the role. This incongruence at times created friction within the system. Congruence and ownership of this purpose by the employee facilitated

commitment to the tasks at hand. The cognition associated with this element of purpose is, “Am I clear about the purpose of my job?” Of all employment categories, the professionals exhibited the highest degree of goal internalization along with the least amount of variance in the degree to which they were energized by organizational goals, which might be explained by clarity of role identification.

Knowledge of organizational goals had to do with awareness by the individual of the mission of the larger system that the job supported. By means of this knowledge, the tasks performed by the individual could be aligned or revised to support institutional mission with minimal drag or resistance, provided that the individual shared a commitment to the goals of the organization. The adaptive cognition associated with this domain is, “Am I committed to the goals of this organization?”

Task differentiation referred to the distribution of all the institutional tasks needed for the organization to survive and accomplish its goals among the body of employees. In order to do this, each individual role was differentiated to respond within the unique part that was played by that specific unit. The cognition associated with task differentiation involved a transition to collective awareness, in which the individual thought of the self as a component in the collective identity of the organization, “How do we do everything required to accomplish desired goals?”

Collaborative integration then involved the coordination of all individual members into a cohesive whole that worked together toward the desired destination. The active cognition associated with this final component of perceived control is, “How do we work together to move toward institutional goals?” The answer to this question presents a major challenge operating within the community college today.

Dynamic Processes of Psychological Empowerment

While the data of the quantitative component of this study permitted the comparison of groups with regard to the components of psychological empowerment, from the qualitative data it was possible to explore the dynamic basis of some of those components within this context. Three processes emerged from the qualitative data: learning, decision-making processes, and trusting. Each of these elements will be explored in this next section as the active processes from which the fruit of psychological empowerment may emerge.



Figure 6-2: Dynamic Processes of Psychological Empowerment

Learning: Developer of Competence

Competence did not transfer automatically from one environment or one kind of challenge to another. The process of gaining competence required active involvement in learning. Methods involved in adaptive learning included mentoring, professional development, coursework, and active involvement within the profession of the individual. Involvement took different forms such as employees learning how to adapt and work positively within the culture of the college or learning how to gather information through

a social network. The key element of learning was that active involvement in the process of ongoing adaptation equipped competent people with the knowledge and skills to continue to adapt, and therefore remain competent, over time. The sustainability of competence in this workplace appears to be dependent on active involvement in learning supported by a healthy social network.

Learning produced by feedback that was encouraging validated the worth of employees and mobilized positive energy toward the work. However, negative feedback tended to stimulate defensive reactions that generated lingering negative emotions related to anger or fear. Defensive reactions consistently produced patterns of behavior that increased isolation and decreased support. The ambiguity that resulted from the lack of feedback produced widely varying responses depending on the employee's tolerance for ambiguity. For those who were vulnerable to mistrust, the absence of feedback tended to produce negative emotional reactions. The strength of the connection with the giver of feedback also created an interesting dynamic. Of particular interest was the strength of the bond between students and employees working at the boundary level of the institution. The tendency was for those individuals to align more strongly with the students than with the leaders in the administration who were perceived as psychologically remote and unaware. In these situations, greater credence was given to feedback of students than administrators.

A large amount of institutional energy appeared to be committed to professional development. However, in general, knowledge was likely to be acquired for personal rather than institutional utility. Personal improvement through learning was largely detached from improvement of the college, which signaled a disconnect between

individual growth and college growth. The LCP, as a college-wide initiative, promoted the alignment of personal and organizational goals as it provided a gateway to upward mobility within the institution. However, two distinct challenges were noted. The first was the challenge that employees might engage in the LCP to obtain the reward of a promotion that might never materialize, and the second was the disconnection of the LCP from the actual work environment. In the first challenge, the tension was not resolved for the majority of participants, but due to the ongoing nature of organizational evolution, the hope could still be kept alive for interested participants that someday the opportunity for advancement might be fulfilled. The disconnection between the LCP and the work environment appeared to produce a tension within the organization that may ultimately challenge the status quo of the cultural balance once a critical mass of employees is reached. More participants continue to move through this program each year, and a large number of senior personnel are moving into position for retirement.

Decision-making Processes

Decision-making was an ongoing process within the college in which all members were involved at one level or another. The most important aspect of decision-making that was unstated, but apparent, was that everyone wanted to make the “right” decision, which would be a decision that produced the least amount of error. Error could mean different things for different people depending on what it was that they were trying to accomplish and where they stood in the institutional hierarchy. In the process of decision-making, personal power and influence within the system appeared to play a major role.

A great deal of institutional energy was involved in preserving a vertical structure in which decision-making was largely controlled by upper-level administrators who exhibited a relatively strong preference for control. No one individual had access to all

institutional knowledge, yet if individuals retained the right to control decision-making without adequate knowledge, the data suggests that in one way or another, the institution suffered from errors as the result. Unilateral decision-making in the absence of a full complement of knowledge produced a number of unintended consequences. Strategies that seemed to be relatively ineffective for promoting either individual or institutional adaptability included the use of intimidation or threats, withdrawal from communication, defensive judgment, and unilateral persuasion. With each of these strategies, there was a net loss to the institution, that produced unintended consequences such as broken lines of communication, loss of access to knowledge, perpetuation of errors within the status quo, and most commonly, negative emotions. The negative emotions that were expressed included anger, fear, frustration, and discouragement. The release of negative emotions seemed to start a self-perpetuating process in motion that hindered organizational effectiveness, and in some cases even resulted in a counterforce of traction. In those cases, the wounded party actively promoted negative alignment with the organization for those within their immediate sphere of influence.

Two strategies that appeared to be particularly effective for enhancing decision-making influence and the quality of outcomes included enhancement of expertise and collaboration. With enhanced expertise through education, the sphere of self-determination was enlarged, and increased responsibility for the outcomes was acquired. However, when responsibility was given without access to sufficient decision-making authority, the outcome was diminished effectiveness as every novel situation had to be negotiated at higher levels within the chain of command causing errors or delays in responsiveness. Collaboration promoted involvement of the group in decision-making,

and when this was accompanied by equality within the negotiating process, strong bonds of alliance were fostered as collective vision and knowledge was represented in the decision-making. By means of collaboration, knowledge of the group was widely shared through a dense network of communication, which equipped all members of the group with the collective power to negotiate for group needs to be met proactively in order to be prepared to adapt as conditions changed. The sensitivity of the closely connected group to changes, and the openness of communication within the group promoted high performance norms. However, collaboration was predicated on the willingness of those in authority to relinquish unilateral control of decision-making to the group.

Deeper moral values also came into play in decision-making, as ethical and spiritual values were brought to bear on personal choices. Violation of deep moral values tended to produce expressions of outrage, but commitments based on deep moral values produced a high level of personal congruence and stability within the work environment. The capacities of balance, generativity, resilience, sacrifice, and perseverance in adversity were expressed as the positive outcomes of deeply moral decisions.

Trusting: Facilitating Organizational Alignment

The organizational capacity to promote trust appeared to be instrumental in promoting organizational learning by alignment of individual and organizational priorities. Through trust, an individual's energy could be released to support the larger vision and purpose of the institution. Spreitzer and Mishra (1999) emphasized the adaptive nature of communication loops that fostered organizational trust. The paradox of trust was that it involved a reciprocal process with no beginning and no end. Employees were more inclined to trust because they were trusted. People were more likely to be trusted because they were trustworthy. For individual members who started with a

foundation of personal confidence, the inclination was to trust and to be rewarded for trusting. This suggests that trust in one's own abilities is foundational to psychological empowerment, but trust in others is built over time through interaction. Spreitzer & Mishra predicted that trust would emerge in an actualizing environment as a critical component of psychological empowerment.

The counterpoint to trust was mistrust. When an individual experienced a breach in trust, a personal crisis was signaled that challenged the individual to work through the perceived betrayal. Strategies selected for this challenge included lashing out, withdrawing, questioning, talking to others, and displays of negative emotions. When withdrawal was chosen as a strategy for resolving the betrayal, a gap in communication tended to result. In the quantitative data collection process, all late respondents provided data anonymously. It may be that this choice to withhold data regarding the identity of respondents, which was repeated by all of the late responders, reflected uncertainty regarding the trustworthiness of the researcher. As a counterpoint to trust, the widespread individual capacity for mistrust suggests a vulnerability that might tend to limit free exchange of information and knowledge within this organization. This is corroborated in the data.

Patterns of Behavior and Emotions

Behaviors described by participants provided a glimpse into the active outworking of the psychological dynamic of empowerment, however it was clear that a significant gap existed between the reality of behavior in the workplace and the memories of behaviors recalled by participants. Most pertinent to this discussion are four distinct aspects of behaviors that emerged with sufficient clarity to provide a reliable basis for

conclusions: descriptions of positive impact of work, barriers, survival strategies, and fostering psychological empowerment.

In general, employees expressed a positive emotional orientation toward work in this college. They liked to work, and especially enjoyed being able to put to use the skills in which they had developed expertise. Like a racehorse released at the gate, the act of working produced a deep sense of satisfaction for most employees, which would have been frustrated if they had been inhibited in performance of their job. The capacity to work and the benefit to the organization of work produced a mutually beneficial relationship. Part of the benefit to the employee was the sense of contributing effort to work in service to an organization with an important purpose for society. By aligning personal energy with the larger organization, they became part of something larger than the individual self, which imbued the act of work with a sense of higher purpose. Enjoyment of work was also fostered through connections with other people in the very social environment of the college workplace. Particularly satisfying mention was made of working as part of a team or experiencing support in times of need through a trusted network of supportive relationships.

Barriers to the effective flow of work tended to result from some form of negative encounter in the environment, which in turn shaped the way that people performed the daily work of the job to which they were assigned. The most consistently noted barrier blocked the employee from making an impact on how the work was organized. Employees who attempted to provide input when operations were not functioning well were ignored or dismissed as complainers, and the information that they might have made available to inform decision-making at the next higher level never moved into the

decision-making process. The fallout from this kind of transaction produced a tendency toward apathy, in which employees were not motivated to excel. Over time, as this capacity for complacency enlarged, the tendency was for both the individuals and the organization to be compromised in the ability to adapt to changing environmental contingencies. One additional barrier involved a lack of respect of some leaders for the value of the employees and the contribution that each one made in the work environment. The negative emotion generated by the lack of respect produced a negative emotional charge in the work environment.

Survival strategies employed to cope with the barriers when encountered most often included avoidance in one form or another. Detachment was the most common survival strategy, which contributed to difficulty navigating the environment effectively, but also served to protect and ensure survival. There was no apparent value for taking a risk that might produce undesirable consequences, so disengaging from responsibility to the college provided an outlet for safety. Other aspects of detachment included “flying under the radar” and minimizing conflict. One courageous approach to the challenge of survival involved an active choice to change the self when confronted by powerlessness to change the situation. In this way, new skills were learned, new strategies attempted, and increased effectiveness and resilience was the result.

Finally, two broad aspects of organizational functioning that contributed to psychological empowerment included the value of learning through experience and the role of leadership in promoting organizational learning. When employees lived out the consequences of decisions, learning was the result. This was particularly true when they were permitted to learn from mistakes without fear of retribution. In general, the

confidence of the individual was bounded by the limited sphere in which expertise was already a given, yet when given authority to make decisions in a broader arena with the support of a safety net, an enhanced range of expertise developed over time.

The role of the leader was important for setting the emotional tone for this process to take place. In order to do this, the leader needed to create an open atmosphere in which employees could speak in safety. This atmosphere of safety included the freedom to ask for help when needed. And in the process of creating a context in which it was possible to take risks, the leader also needed to be willing to trust the employees enough to relinquish control. Beyond these consistent qualities of an empowering leader, one leader in particular realized that in order to promote alignment of employees in service to organizational goals, opportunities for advancement needed to be developed in order for people to stay motivated to continue to grow in the workplace.

Synthesis and Conclusions

This study of psychological empowerment in a community college preparing for change has examined the diverse experiences, beliefs, and behaviors of a set of employees both quantitatively and qualitatively. In this final section, major sources of tension will be articulated, along with the key elements of psychological empowerment that appear to serve as the greatest source of personal and corporate strength. This study will conclude with recommendations for future research.

Psychological Empowerment in the Community College

Psychological empowerment is a reciprocal process involving an individual and the context in which the individual operates, which promotes responsible action, valued expertise, and involvement with higher purpose. The organizational context of the community college has grown in size and complexity from its humble origins at the

beginning of the 20th century. One of the most challenging aspects of complexity reflected in the interactions of this institution was that a great distance of time, place and person often separated the cause of transactions from the effect. When cause and effect were separated, both individual and organizational learning was diminished or slowed. Psychological empowerment of employees is a phenomenon that holds great promise for enhancing organizational coherence and adaptive learning in times of change by encouraging organizational stewardship of all members of the college community. The following figure expresses pictorially the dynamic of psychological empowerment, incorporating the value-added dimensions that also emerged in this study.



Figure 6-3: Value Added Model: Dynamic of Psychological Empowerment

Responsible action emerged from the interaction of competence under control through the reciprocal dynamic of learning. Valued expertise arose from control in service to organizational goals mediated by the dynamic process of decision-making. Commitment to higher purpose emerged from competence aligned with organizational goals, mediated by the dynamic of trusting.

Implications for Leadership Development Programs

The community college of the 21st century is struggling with an identity crisis as the majority of leaders across the nation approach retirement. Leadership development is a critical strategy for making the most of a difficult season of change. Several recommendations for enhancing the effectiveness of institution-based leadership development programs emerged from this research. First, leadership development initiatives will function most effectively if they actively involve leaders at all levels of the institution meaningfully throughout the life of the program. By means of the active involvement of a wide range of leaders it would then become possible to incorporate systems thinking as a fundamental approach to leadership development.

Second, by means of broad-based participation of the leaders of the organization, it would become possible to open up the various work environments of participants to the transfer of knowledge and skills. Participant learning would be strengthened through direct application of learning in the work environment. This would permit all aspects of the institution to be involved as a learning laboratory for leadership. Results of the study suggest that the more that the psychological empowerment of members of the college can be encouraged, the more they will embrace the goal of organizational stewardship.

Implications for Aspiring Leaders of Community Colleges

Several implications for aspiring leaders emerged from this study. In much of the literature about the community college in America, the college is seen as a bright light in the economic future of the disenfranchised members of the culture. The hope has long been held that with access guaranteed through the tradition of the Open Door, every member of society could use formal education as a springboard to upward mobility. Tied to this hope is the hope that as each individual in our nation aspires to achieve great

things through educational pursuit, collectively the sum will be greater than the parts and our nation will continue to emerge in global prominence. Particularly in this changing economic context where knowledge is the primary resource that distinguishes the “haves” from the “have-nots,” our corporate growth as a nation depends largely on the increases of learning in our individual members. Rather than following the path of traditional form in the community college, now is the time to maximize the path of innovation of form in service to these traditional values. The traditional hierarchical form was able to be effective in smaller, simpler institutions at the inception of the community college. However, as the chrysalis encloses the emerging form of the butterfly, the traditional bureaucratic structure of the community college encloses the dynamic potential of the community college.

This study points to the need to develop the capacity for collective learning among all members of the community college workforce in order maximize the opportunity to be effective in adapting to rapidly changing circumstances. In order to do this, it will become increasingly important to develop effective strategies to share knowledge and power for enhanced decision-making throughout the institution, including the classroom. It will be especially important for the new leaders of the community college to listen responsively to the staff and students who operate at the boundary level of the institution where change is most likely to register first. Leaders need to be prepared to foster the competence of all members in service to organizational goals through strategic professional development opportunities. And most of all, in order to promote institutional cohesion, leaders of the emerging community college most endeavor to be trustworthy and congruent in word and deed.

Challenges and Opportunities

One of the challenges that developed with this study was reflected in the unusually high scores in response to the Empowerment Scale (Menon, 2001). As individuals responded to the narrow range of items related to each subscale, it became clear that there was a tendency for the majority of respondents to endorse items that were associated with a positive view of the self. If this study were to be repeated, it would be advisable to use an alternative scale that might provide a wider range of differentiation for the attributes of psychological empowerment, along with a validity scale to assess for the presence of distortion due to the tendency to “fake good.” It would be appropriate to use the adaptive cognitions articulated in this study of the components of psychological empowerment as a starting point for a new assessment protocol for psychological empowerment.

However, there is some question that remains as to whether or not the presence of psychological empowerment is a construct that can adequately be measured quantitatively as a continuous variable. While it is clear that individuals may be more or less psychologically empowered, this more-or-lessness appears to vary significantly over time and context, so that it may be an emergent function of the interaction between organizational and individual dynamics. As new research methodologies develop in the social sciences to capture the complexities of organizational behavior, perhaps the underlying patterns that contribute to psychological empowerment may become clearer.

Recommendations for Future Studies

Psychological empowerment appeared to be fostered by a context in which there is a commitment to the following three elements: hope, psychological safety, and sustainable growth. Although this was not the focus of this study, the data point to these elements as worthy of further study.

Hope: Persistence in Struggle

All employees interviewed in this study indicated that at one time or another their belief in their personal ability to function competently, in full control, and in alignment with organizational priorities was challenged. No one escaped the bumps and bruises of organizational life entirely. However, the difference between employees who exhibited a highly developed capacity for psychological empowerment and those who did not was in the determination to persist in the struggle toward a positive resolution of the crisis or challenge. The affirming quality of hope appears to be associated with a courageous willingness to persist in a struggle without needing to overwhelm the adversary, but to restore positive alignment when the struggle has been resolved. Recommendation for further study would focus on the effect of hope on problem-solving and on strategies for instilling hope in difficult situations.

Psychological Safety

The capacity for individual psychological empowerment was not entirely under the control of either the individual or the organization. A disempowered individual in a psychologically healthy environment might be unable to perceive the opportunity for exercise of empowerment due to preexisting challenges. An empowered individual in a psychologically threatening environment also suffered from the encounter, but was more likely to be aware of the freedom to exercise the option to leave the unhealthy unit. However, psychological empowerment of employees requires a reciprocal organizational capacity to foster the psychological safety of all members of the organization. This organizational dynamic includes the capacity to promote trust and alignment of employees in an atmosphere of open communication characterized by trust and support.

Recommended future study of psychological safety would focus on strategies to promote psychological safety in times of instability and change.

Healthy, Sustainable Growth

As individuals who make up the organization are supported in a psychologically empowering organization, the vitality of the individual contributes to the healthy growth of the whole. Psychological empowerment, as explored in this study, was expressed in the social context. It was fundamentally the exercise of psychological freedom to choose; to decide how to respond or act or be in this place at this time. The psychological experience of empowerment was not something that existed in reality as an object to be grasped and manipulated in order to examine it from different angles. Rather it was the fruit of each individual's sustained encounter in the matrix of the cultural context of this particular organization. It emerged from a vital, reciprocal influencing process in which the pre-existing psychological make-up of the employee interacted with the situations and people of the institution in a dynamic process of change and organizational evolution.

The cognition that captures the overall adaptive function of psychological empowerment that developed from this study is, "Can I do what I need to do for the greater good of the whole without fear?" This study has amplified the voices of participants revealing polarities of positive and negative emotions that produce a profound effect on psychological empowerment. Negative emotions released by defensive routines within organizational relationships produced diminished alignment that reverberated throughout an individual's social network, setting up resistance to change, which operated as traction, that slowed down organizational movement. Future study of the role of both positive and negative emotions in the community college workplace would open the door to more effective strategies for healthy emotional

expression in the workplace, and minimize the deleterious impact of unchecked negative emotions.

In addition, two distinct pathways for future research would be recommended in order to build on the foundation laid by this study. First, a significant loss of collective intelligence was uncovered due to the large gap between the boundary layer of the organization where the need for change was encountered by frontline employees, and the insulated layers of decision-making by administrators far removed from the need. An area of inquiry that would be very helpful for improving organizational and individual effectiveness would involve analysis of the barriers between these two levels of operation in the community college. If the barriers for trusting and decision-making could be identified and removed between these two levels, it would be interesting to see how organizational effectiveness in response to changing environmental might be enhanced.

This line of future research might also involve the second line of study to identify strategies that would be most helpful to prepare employees to engage actively in developing collective learning capabilities useful for resolving the psychological tension associated with change. Positive strategies to foster collective learning might include Appreciative Inquiry or the World Café model for engaging an empowered workforce in the process of healthy adaptation within a season of turbulent social change.

Finally as the construct of psychological empowerment is developed in the lives of people in the workplace of the community college, transferring the weight of knowledge acquired to enhance the psychological empowerment of students might provide an opportunity to overcome the organizational traction of dependence and lack of persistence among students in the community college. A similar idea was the impetus

behind the organizational change in the study by Foster-Fishman & Keys (1997). Organizational leaders in a social service agency wanted to model empowerment for clients, but it was first necessary to develop an empowered workforce before modeling it for clients. Within the community college, there is a strong tension between the tradition of teacher controlled learning and the emerging paradigm of student-centered learning. A helpful first step in this direction would be to conduct a study of the psychological empowerment of students using the same approach as this study.

APPENDIX A
EMPOWERMENT SCALE¹ [9 ITEM VERSION]

The following statements deal with various aspects of work in organizations. Please read each statement carefully in the context of your own work and indicate the extent of your agreement or disagreement with each statement by writing a number (1 to 6) in the space provided:

1	2	3	4	5	6
Strongly Disagree	Moderately Disagree	Mildly Disagree	Mildly Agree	Moderately Agree	Strongly Agree

- ___ 1. I can influence the way work is done in my department.
- ___ 2. I can influence decisions taken in my department.
- ___ 3. I have the authority to take decisions at work.
- ___ 4. I have the capabilities required to do my job well.
- ___ 5. I have the skills and abilities to do my job well.
- ___ 6. I have the competence to work effectively.
- ___ 7. I am inspired by what we are trying to achieve as an organization.
- ___ 8. I am inspired by the goals of the organization.
- ___ 9. I am enthusiastic about working toward the organization's objectives.

(Citation formatted by the author of this instrument.)

¹ Menon, S.T. (2001). Employee Empowerment: An Integrative Psychological Approach. *Applied Psychology – An International Review*, 50(1): 153-180.

APPENDIX B
SCORING INSTRUCTIONS FOR EMPOWERMENT SCALE

1. Sum all nine items to get a score for psychological empowerment.
Scores from 1 to 22 indicate very low empowerment.
Scores from 23 to 40 indicate low to moderate empowerment.
Scores from 41 to 54 indicate moderate to high empowerment.
2. Sum items 1, 2, & 3 to get a score for the sub-scale perceived control.
Scores from 1 to 7 indicate very low perceived control.
Scores from 8 to 13 indicate low to moderate perceived control.
Scores from 14 to 18 indicate moderate to high perceived control.
3. Sum items 4, 5, & 6 to get a score for the sub-scale perceived competence.
Scores from 1 to 7 indicate very low perceived competence.
Scores from 8 to 13 indicate low to moderate perceived competence.
Scores from 14 to 18 indicate moderate to high perceived competence.
4. Sum items 7, 8, & 9 to get a score for the sub-scale goal internalization.
Scores from 1 to 7 indicate very low goal internalization.
Scores from 8 to 13 indicate low to moderate goal internalization.
Scores from 14 to 18 indicate moderate to high goal internalization.

Recommended Usage in Organizations:

1. Calculate overall empowerment score and then the sub-scale scores. If overall score is less than 45, the sub-scale scores can help identify specific areas leading to low overall empowerment and appropriate remedial actions. For example, if perceived control is low, then empowerment strategies that include delegation and participation in decision making is indicated. If perceived competence is low, then training, supportive leadership, and a review of selection procedures to ensure person-job fit is indicated. If goal internalization is low, better communication of mission and vision, inspiring leadership, and participatory goal setting is indicated.
2. If data on other variables are available, relationships between these variables and empowerment and sub-scales scores can be examined using statistical techniques. For example, empowerment can be related to job performance ratings or job satisfaction ratings to see there is a statistically significant relationship.
3. The empowerment scores can be used to compare groups within the organization. For example, average employee scores in different departments can be compared. Significant differences usually indicate leadership and work design differences.

Other comparisons include male vs. female employees, employees with a specific training vs. those without that training, etc.

APPENDIX C INTERVIEW PROTOCOL

In what ways have the various people in the college affected your sense of confidence in your work?

Describe the ways that the people in the college have helped you to acquire information or knowledge you need to be competent in your work.

What messages have you received that indicate that you are an important and valued member of this college?

What specific messages have you received that make you aware of how competent you are?

Describe your role in decision-making regarding the work of your department.

Describe the ways that your interactions with other people in the college affect your sense of control over your work.

To what extent do you perceive that the various people of the college value your honest feedback?

How do you go about the process of influencing how things are done in your work environment?

Describe what you do in a situation where a difficult decision needs to be made.

If you believe that policies or procedures in your area need to be revised in order to be more effective, what would be your role in getting the change process started?

Describe the specific actions you take when you have the authority to do whatever is necessary to solve a problem in your work.

How do you go about resolving conflicts over decisions that affect your work?

Describe the ways in which your personal goals are aligned with the goals of the college.

What is your specific role in helping the college to achieve its mission?

What are the most important ways that you actively contribute to the goals of the college?

Describe the ways that you believe you are empowered to respond to the challenges you deal with on a day-to-day basis in your work?

APPENDIX D
INTERVIEW QUESTIONS ACCORDING TO RESEARCH QUESTION

Research Question #2: What beliefs and experiences contribute to the cognition of psychological empowerment of employees in the community college setting?

In what ways have the various people in the college affected your sense of confidence in your work?

Describe the ways that the people in the college have helped you to acquire information or knowledge you need to be competent in your work.

What specific messages have you received that make you aware of how competent you are?

Describe your role in decision-making regarding the work of your department.

Describe the ways that your interactions with other people in the college affect your sense of control over your work.

What messages have you received that indicate that you are an important and valued member of this college?

To what extent do you perceive that the various people of the college value your honest feedback?

If you believe that policies and procedures in your area need to be revised in order to be more effective, what would be your role in getting the change process started?

Describe the ways that you believe you are empowered to respond to the challenges you deal with on a day-to-day basis in your work?

Research Question #3: What behaviors are most closely associated with the cognitive state of empowerment in the community college workplace?

What are the most important ways that you actively contribute to the goals of the college?

Describe the ways in which your personal goals are aligned with the goals of the college.

How do you go about the process of influencing how things are done in your work environment?

Describe what you do in a situation where a difficult decision needs to be made.

Describe the actions you take when you are confident that you have the authority to do whatever is necessary to solve a problem in your work.

How do you go about resolving conflicts over decisions that affect your work?

What is your specific role in helping the college to achieve its mission?

APPENDIX E
INFORMED CONSENT

Informed Consent Process

You have been invited to participate in a research project that is part of my dissertation for the University of Florida. Your participation in this important work is entirely voluntary. This study will take place at _____ during the 2004-05 academic year. Information will be gathered from all participants in this study from a 9-question survey of employee empowerment. If you decide to participate, your answers to that survey will be kept entirely confidential.

At a later time, a small group of participants will be selected for individual follow-up interviews to explore in depth their beliefs and actions that are associated with the construct under investigation. If you are selected, you will be contacted, and a convenient time and location will be arranged for this interview. You will also be asked to write your thoughts about a problem you may have noticed in the college that you would like to solve, and bring this case study with you to the interview. If you are taking only the online survey, less than 10 minutes will be needed to complete all items. If you are selected, approximately one hour will be required for participation in the interview phase and an additional 30 minutes will be needed to complete the case study. Your participation in this project will be completely voluntary, and you may withdraw at any time. Your information will be kept entirely confidential. You do not have to answer any question you do not wish to answer.

Following the collection of data, your name will be separated from the data that you give in order to protect your confidentiality. If you are interviewed, the interview will be audio recorded, and transcribed. A research assistant will be used to transcribe the audio-tapes, and that will be the only other person who will have direct access to the data you give at any time. A pseudonym, or fake name, will be used for your audiotape, and if you would like you may select your own pseudonym, or one will be assigned to you in order to preserve confidentiality of your responses.

It is expected that the risks or harms associated with this research should be no greater than those encountered in daily life or during the performance of routine examinations. No compensation will be given for participating in this study.

Questions or concerns about your rights may be directed to:

UFIRB office
Box 112250
University of Florida,

EMPOWERMENT SCALE² [9 item version]

The following statements deal with various aspects of work in organizations. Please read each statement carefully in the context of your own work and indicate the extent of your agreement or disagreement with each statement by writing a number (1 to 6) in the space provided:-

1	2	3	4	5	6
Strongly Disagree	Moderately Disagree	Mildly Disagree	Mildly Agree	Moderately Agree	Strongly Agree

- ____ 1. I can influence the way work is done in my department.
 ____ 2. I can influence decisions taken in my department.
 ____ 3. I have the authority to take decisions at work.
 ____ 4. I have the capabilities required to do my job well.
 ____ 5. I have the skills and abilities to do my job well.
 ____ 6. I have the competence to work effectively.
 ____ 7. I am inspired by what we are trying to achieve as an organization.
 ____ 8. I am inspired by the goals of the organization.
 ____ 9. I am enthusiastic about working toward the organization's objectives.

²Menon, S.T. (2001). Employee Empowerment: An Integrative Psychological Approach. Applied Psychology – An International Review, 50(1): 153-180.

INTERVIEW PROTOCOL

In what ways have the various people in the college affected your sense of confidence in your work?

Describe the ways that the people in the college have helped you to acquire information or knowledge you need to be competent in your work.

What messages have you received that indicate that you are an important and valued member of this college?

What specific messages have you received that make you aware of how competent you are?

Describe your role in decision-making regarding the work of your department.

Describe the ways that your interactions with other people in the college affect your sense of control over your work.

To what extent do you perceive that the various people of the college value your honest feedback?

How do you go about the process of influencing how things are done in your work environment?

Describe what you do in a situation where a difficult decision needs to be made.

If you believe that policies or procedures in your area need to be revised in order to be more effective, what would be your role in getting the change process started?

Describe the specific actions you take when you have the authority to do whatever is necessary to solve a problem in your work.

How do you go about resolving conflicts over decisions that affect your work?

Describe the ways in which your personal goals are aligned with the goals of the college.

What is your specific role in helping the college to achieve its mission?

What are the most important ways that you actively contribute to the goals of the college?

Describe the ways that you believe you are empowered to respond to the challenges you deal with on a day to day basis in your work?

Pseudonym Form

Name:

___Pseudonym Chosen: _____

___I choose to ask the researcher to assign a pseudonym.

Signature

Date

APPENDIX F
TYPOLOGY ANALYSIS SAMPLE TRANSCRIPT CODING

Jean: Administrator LCP Participant High Scoring
Experiences Summarized

Perceived Competence

Themes: Voluntary Collaboration
 Professional Development
 Validation
 Contraindications
 Unresolved tension

Voluntary Collaboration

Mostly by willingly agreeing to work with me on things. And my confidence increases when I contact somebody and they say, “Oh, of course I’ll serve on that team,” and then actually show up and do what they say will...will do, and contribute and participate. Well, that happens I’d say almost on a daily basis, is that people do support me and the projects that I’m working on

Professional Development

One of the first ways—and I’ve been here going on 6 years—my first year here, I was given the opportunity to go to a 2-week training program that’s specific to people in my field,
And that 2-week period provided me with such a good foundation for what I needed to do and the challenges that were going to be coming to me in my job over the course of the last 6 years that, um, I don’t know that I could have done it if I hadn’t gone to the training.
And I think that by allowing me to do that, you know, through SPD funding and just through, um, my supervisor allowing me to structure my work day, to accommodate participating in those kinds of things, has been very empowering.

Validation

Both formal and informal messages have, um been given to me at different times since I’ve been here, and formally I received an award, an annual--one of the annual awards that was given out by the president at the commencement address, and that was quite a surprise and quite an indication that what I was doing had--had been valued. But I think just as important to me has been the times when I have been on the elevator with somebody, and they’ve said, “Oh, that was a good job you did on such-and-such.”
Well, I...let me go with...with specific messages that make me aware of how competent I am, and I-or-think that I might be. And one of those specific messages was that, um...recently, my, um, boss was out on an extended leave, and I was asked to fill in on a couple of his roles, and that was an indication that, um of my competence—that, you

know, several people believed in that. The walls are still standing, and he and I both have, still have jobs. You know, they'll say, "Well, you know, I know a little bit, but you have, you know, 20 years experience in this field," and so I think that-that I'm empowered from that regard.

You know, just because people do recognize that I have some skills and some-some experience and abilities that they may not have had the opportunity to develop in their professional life. And so it does, um, you know, empower me a little bit.

Contraindications

Um-I have-I have to laugh because sometimes we get messages that say other things! That we're not as competent as we think we are! Oh, um, especially when you look at other institutions; other community colleges and some of the things that they're doing. You know, you think you're doing really well in your area, and then you run into somebody at a conference or a workshop, and they talk about some of the accomplishments they've had, and you're going, "Oh, wow! Okay! I thought I was doing real well before I talked to you!"

Unresolved tension

You know, I was just thinking of a couple instances with a colleague who is no longer in a position that I interact with, but there were conflicts between my department and hers.

Network

Where I can interact with colleagues from across the county, from throughout the state, And that, you know-that's one of the downsides about being in-in a department where, you know, there aren't really anybody else on campus that would like-that really-that I can go to for advice on some-some areas, um,with regard to what I do. But I can go outside the college.

And having those connections, and being able to develop those over the years has-has helped a lot.

Jean: Administrator	LCP Participant	High Scoring
Experiences Summarized		

Perceived Control

Themes:	Decision-making
	Deadline
	Feedback to Others
	Persuasion

Decision-making

And generally, they recognize that it's not a decision that needs to be made at my level, it's a decision that needs to be made at-at their level. Where they will have to live by it. Most times they have a good intuition for which direction to go.

And generally, they recognize that it's not a decision that needs to be made at my level, it's a decision that needs to be made at-at their level.

Deadline

So my deadline is very important to me, but if I'm asking, say, a faculty member to provide some information to me or to, you know, write something or contribute something to, um-this effort, then it may not-it may be a very low priority for them. And so that does-as my deadline draws nearer, I tend to increase my stress level.

Feedback to Others

And I have some people who will routinely come to me for feedback or for perspective. But I also know that there are some people who would prefer not to have feedback. It's kind of like having children in a lot of ways. They don't take my advice either! They-they know that I'm going to give them feedback, and they can take it with a grain of salt, But I think there are other people on campus that don't really want feedback

Persuasion

Persuasiveness is one of the skills that was discussed in that class--about leaders in higher ed,

Jean: Administrator LCP Participant High Scoring
Experiences Summarized

Goal Internalization

Themes: Executive alignment
 Support for institutional goals
 Sponsoring enthusiasm
 Leadership development
 Involvement in college activities
 Involvement in professional activities

Executive alignment

And they'll support me with-by being an advocate for me-and by championing some of my projects in an arena that I may not have access to. For example, at a vice-president's meeting, you know, one of the vice-presidents will say, "Oh, yes, I think this is a good project, and we ought to support it." Or I've run into the president at an event, and he's acknowledged what I do and what I have been working on, and for him to even be aware of that is just an indication that what I do is important. But there would be occasions where I would need their support and their intervention, and they know that when I come to them and say, "Can you intervene on this?" that-that I really do need it.

Support for institutional goals

and it involved being away from my job for 2 weeks, flying or going to-being in, um-one location for a week, and then being in Washington for a week, and, you know, it was a very hefty price in terms of registration fee and all the-the cost of it.

Yeah, it was—it was very good. I didn't know that at the time but in hindsight can look back and say, "That investment that the college made in me has been returned to them tenfold in my understanding of the work situation and what I was being able to accomplish."

Sponsoring enthusiasm

It's like, "Oh, wow! If I had that kind of money, I would, you know, redevelop my curriculum," or "I would, you know-whatever."

Leadership development

And I've been a participant in the leadership program. I think that contributes significantly to the goals of the college. It contributes to my personal goals, but even more so it contributes to the goals of the college, which is to stay-to, um-continue to be a thriving, growing, productive institution. And I think in order to be that, the people inside the college—that make up the college—have to be...have to be that, too.

Involvement in college activities

I think that's what makes it fun. You know, I really do. And I think it's the freedom to be able to do that. You know, to join Toastmasters and try that out or to, you know, participate and attend the planning council meetings or to, you know, go to some of the plays and things on campus.

I think, you know, those are the fun things. You know, to...to be involved in-in things. And, um-you know, there are a lot of groups that are always looking for volunteers, you know XXXX is always, you know, wanting volunteers.

Involvement in professional activities

Well, going back to this other question, looking at it in a little different light, about "being empowered to respond to the challenges I deal with," is another thing that I think this college has encouraged and allowed me to do is to get involved with organizations and...and groups outside of the college.

It's not here. It's in...you know, but...but I have been able to develop peer relationships with the other institutes of higher ed in XXXX County, with the other community colleges in XXXX and across the nation. So-and I think the college has been very supportive of that.

Jean: Administrator LCP Participant High Scoring
Experiences Summarized

Empowerment

Themes: Trust
 Security

Trust

I have—I'm very fortunate in my supervisor and the accessibility I have to him and the, um-level of communication we have and the understanding that we have about what stays in the room and what doesn't and, you know, how feely we share. So I'm very fortunate in that regard.

And that that is also appreciated at some level. “Oh, okay, well you saw this, you took care of it. Good.” You know. If it’s with, you know, not going out of bounds or not. But doing anything I think, you know, we share enough that there’s a real level of trust.

Security

Yeah, I do have a safety-I do have a strong safety net.

And I’ve had that with-I’ve been under two different supervisors since I’ve been here, and both of them provided a-a very strong safety net.

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BIOGRAPHICAL SKETCH

Carole Eagle Luby graduated from Florida Southern College summa cum laude in 1986 with her Bachelor of Arts in psychology. She completed her Master of Arts in school psychology from the University of South Florida in 1988. Shortly after, she began to work as a counselor for adult high school students at Seminole Community College. She completed a Master of Science in mental health counseling at Stetson University in 1994, and became a Licensed Mental Health Counselor in 1998. She began her doctoral studies at the University of Florida in 2001 in higher education administration. She continues to work in the community college system.