IT TAKES TIME TO TURN AN OCEAN-LINER: MID-LEVEL MANAGERS

NAVIGATING THE ROUGH SEAS OF A THREE COLLEGE MERGER WITHIN THE

TECHNICAL COLLEGE SYSTEM OF GEORGIA

by

JODIE C. VANGROV

(Under the Direction of J. DOUGLAS TOMA)

ABSTRACT

The purpose of this study was to better understand how mid-level managers "navigate" and "survive" the merger of three technical colleges within the Technical College System of Georgia. Understanding mid-level managers is a key component to understanding organizational change that takes place within merging institutions because they link administration (their role of carrying out policies and procedures) and employees (their role as supervisor to lend support and guidance during organizational change). This case study enriches the leadership and organizational change literature by focusing on how these mid-level managers survived and navigated the merger while playing their roles as employee and supervisor. This study included interviews from surviving mid-level managers of the merger and included: academic deans, student services coordinators and directors, and mid-level managers from non-academic areas of the college such as maintenance, technology, and college relations. The specific research questions were:

- How did mid-level managers navigate the merger process (in other words, how did they "survive" the merger)?

- How did they guide and mange their own employees as they went through this organizational change?

This study was conducted at the newly merged Chattahoochee Technical College where 10 mid-level managers were interviewed. The mid-level managers come from the three separate colleges which are now merged into one entity. Data from the interviews were compiled and analyzed using qualitative research techniques.

INDEX WORDS: Mergers, organizational change, mid-level managers, organizational culture, coping with organizational change, emotional reactions to change, employee attitudes, healing after change, mid-level managers in academia, higher education.

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DEDICATION

I would like to dedicate this dissertation to my parents Robert and Rosebud Levy who forever told me to continue my educational dreams and to aspire to go as far in my education as I could possibly achieve. They never lost faith in my ability to persevere and have been a constant guide and source of motivation throughout the years. With much love, I dedicate this dissertation to them.

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CHAPTER ONE

INTRODUCTION

Mid-level administrators are an essential component of higher educational organizations and constitute a significant force within higher education. Rosser (2000) states that these administrators are "in constant interaction with faculty, students, and the public and thus significantly affect the tenor and climate of the entire institution." She calls them the "unsung professionals" of higher education:

> College and university mid-level administrators are the unsung
>
> professionals of the academy-unsung because their contributions to the
>
> academic enterprise are rarely recognized and professionals because of
>
> their commitment, training, and adherence to high standards of
>
> performance and excellence in their areas of expertise. (p. 5)

Early research by Austin (1985) and Scott (1978) indicates that mid-level managers are regarded as loyal, skilled, and enthusiastic about their jobs. This group comprises over 64% of all administrative staff positions (Sagaria and Johnsrud, 1992). Mid-level managers have a major impact on the tone, manner, and style of the entire institution, and their day-to-day performance has a major impact on the quality of relationships with faculty, students, and the public they serve (Rosser, 2000; Scott, 1978).

Rosser (2000) mentions that understanding the complexity of midlevel administrators' work-life perceptions (especially related to morale) is important to higher education organizations because those perceptions will potentially affect how

well they perform their jobs and may determine their longevity. She describes a need for case studies to provide a "substantive contribution because such research provides a basis for identification and measurement of particular issues that can be examined in a national context" (p. 10). Specifically, she states, "Expanding the research on midlevel administrators from a local to a national perspective would provide midlevel administrators with the attention they deserve in the academy." Rosser clearly states that this group is virtually ignored in the higher education literature and the time for more research is long overdue:

> Midlevel administrators are the advisors, analysts, counselors, specialists, technicians, and officers on whom faculty and students have come to rely and trust. These unsung professionals in the academy are long overdue to be studied and recognized for their significant contribution to higher education. (p. 7)

Combined with this need to understand mid-level administrators' attitudes and behaviors is the notion of what these administrators do when faced with major organizational change and turmoil in the workplace. How do they navigate change when faced with economic downturns?

Higher education today has been continuing to experience a trend that was described in the early 1980s as a "major turning point" or "crisis" in its life cycle (Cannon, 1983). The years of large enrollment growths, rapid expansions of colleges and universities, large endowments, and proliferation of academic programs are gone. Higher education has continued to be vulnerable to financial cut-backs from both state and federal governments (Hovey, 1999). Since the economic downturn of 2007, there has been a focus on mergers as a trend to downsize among institutions within

educational systems in some states. Mergers within the Technical College System of Georgia are focusing on saving hundreds of thousands of dollars in costs to the state. This trend of mergers in higher education is becoming more widely spread and will continue into the next decade. Administrators and state agencies will be hard pressed to keep their institutions not only fiscally sound but culturally sound with strong leadership to get them through these hard times. Investigating how mid-level managers "navigate and survive" an organizational merger is the key focus of the present study.

Through mergers, institutions undergo marked organizational change in which the newly emerged college now has one board of trustees, one administration, one faculty, and one organizational structure for the newly created system. Each of the colleges loses its individual identity and autonomy and becomes an integral part of the new system (Cannon, 1983). In addition, many positions that were duplicated among the colleges will be eliminated. This phenomenon is worthy of study because it impacts on employees who work within the colleges. Much information is needed about how these employees manage this massive organizational change, and this dissertation helps fill the gap in the literature.

In particular, I examine how mid-level managers navigate their experience with a merger that is occurring between three technical colleges within the Technical College Systems of Georgia. In 2008, the Commissioner of the Technical College System of Georgia announced that there would be 13 technical colleges within the state of Georgia merging into six colleges with one of the mergers consisting of three colleges merging together.

The current study's focus on mid-level managers is critical in that not only are mid-level managers valuable employees who help to run the day-to-day operations of

their organizations, but they also manage employees who look up to them for guidance and assurance during such organizational change. Mid-level managers are key players in organizational change as both sides of the organizational structure affect them. They represent the administration and are tasked with carrying out organizational policies and procedures and they are also perceived as part of the rank and file from their own employees, who looks up to them for guidance and support. Mid-level managers carry big burdens on their shoulders; they understand the structure, the politics in play within the organization, the organizational culture, and the human resource needs of the company. Part of their jobs is to make sure employees stay focused and that productivity remains undisrupted. Negative consequences of a merger could result in absenteeism and turnover and therefore become a much more costly investment in human resources. This focus on employees throughout the organization becomes my second major research question: How do mid-level managers help their employees to successfully navigate organizational change such as a merger?

The results of this study should be of interest to higher education administrators throughout the technical college system in Georgia, and throughout higher education in our country. In addition, as more and more universities and colleges are run like a business trying to bring in revenue to offset the state and federal budget cuts, the management issues facing college administrators should be of interest to managers in business and industry as well.

Fascinated by this current topic of mergers in higher education within the state of Georgia and specifically focusing on the role of mid-level managers in these institutions, I found a large gap in the literature in peer-reviewed higher educational journals of qualitative research relating to mid-level managers experiencing organizational change.

Much of the coping literature on mid-level managers was printed in the mid-1990s and was not recent. Of the more recent studies reviewed (see literature review in chapter two), there are quantitative studies looking at coping that takes place at specific time intervals after the merger . There is no rich thick description of any narrative research expressing what mid-level managers go through during an organizational merger. None of the literature captured qualitative research within higher education institutions. This current study will therefore contribute to this gap in the literature.

The current study is a unique case study of one of these mergers taking place within the Technical College of Georgia. The three merging colleges are Chattahoochee Technical College, North Metro Technical College, and Appalachian Technical College. Together they represent the largest technical college in the state, a moderately sized technical college in the state, and a small technical college within the state. Working within this merged college, I had access to many mid-level managers who were undergoing this huge organizational transition. The actual data collection occurred shortly after the July 1, 2009 merger and took place during the months of October and November. The preparation for the merger was well underway at the three colleges for several months, and committees and employees at these colleges were working together to bring campuses and distinct organizational cultures together. Data collection began four months after the July 1, 2009 merger. The two research questions that guide this study follow: How did mid-level managers navigate the merger process; in other words, how did they "survive" the merger and, how did they guide and mange their own employees as they went through this organizational change?

The current study matches Merriam's (1998) description of the case study as an intensive, holistic description and analysis of a single unit or bounded system that can

be used with other types of qualitative studies such as basic or generic research. In a basic or generic qualitative study, the research includes a description, interpretation, and understanding as well as identifying recurrent patterns in the form of themes or categories and/or delineates a process. This case study will include aspects of a basic or generic paradigm.

Because this research being a case study, only one merger within the Technical College System of Georgia was looked at. The selection of both the research site and participants represents a method of purposeful sampling (Merriam, 1998). Because I am employed at one of the three colleges involved in this merger, I had access to the participants and have a wealth of knowledge about the organizational culture. In addition, since this merger involves three colleges, there were numerous mid-level managers to interview who gave me insight into how they "survived" and "navigated" the merger." I focused only on mid-level managers because they are the "work-horses" of the college in that they see to the day-to-day operations of the technical colleges. In addition, they help describe how they navigated and directed their own employees through the merger. This study is an in-depth case study designed to better understand the selected mid-level managers during this merger. As such, any generalizations of this study's findings should be made with caution.

This study contributes to both the fields of higher education and business and industry in the following ways. First, most of the conceptual and empirical literature on mergers and acquisitions focuses on business and industry studies where one or two coping strategies have been manipulated or studied in an experimental form in the work place. There are very few qualitative studies that capture the chronological stories of mid-level managers and how they went through the ordeal of a merger and how they

survived. First-hand interviews directly describe how managers perceive the merger process and the newly merged organization. Their first-hand experiences give thick, rich description to a body of literature that has only captured a few random variables and consequences. In addition, it is very important not only to find out about how these mid-level managers navigated organizational change, but also from a leadership perspective, it is important to better understand how these key players helped navigate their employees through such transitions in the work place.

Second, this study contributes to higher education theory building. As a practice-oriented discipline, higher education is still in need of theories to help it describe its own organizational processes and outcomes. This study will add some depth to the literature by describing the models of management used by mid-level managers to assist their employees through organizational change.

CHAPTER TWO

LITERATURE REVIEW

As background for my research questions, I synthesized the literature on merger models and organizational change models, field studies involving coping strategies with mergers and organizational change, and mini-theories of motivation and job satisfaction that are related to organizational change.

Merger models and organizational change models directly correlate to what happens in organizations and institutions of higher education when change is introduced and implemented in stable organizational structures. These models show how employees are directly affected by the chaos and turmoil immediately following a major change. Models developed by Lewin (1947) and some derivatives of this model are presented. Field studies were an important part of the literature review as they looked closely at individuals within organizations going through change and at how these individuals coped and reacted to such organizational change. The coping literature offered insight into how mid-level managers might deal with the events surrounding the merger in their day-to-day work. The third area of motivation and job satisfaction theories describe how managers who have employees reporting to them might implement strategies to help these employees survive and cope with the change they are experiencing in the work place.

Since this study is looking at how mid-level managers navigated the mergers taking place within the Technical College System of Georgia (TCSG), the review of the

literature revolved around these three separate arenas of research that apply directly to my research questions. The process of conducting the literature review is described in Appendix A.

<p style="text-align:center">Merger Models and Organizational Change Models</p>

Models describing the process that takes place within organizational change and specifically mergers describe how employees navigate change in the work place. The four models I discuss have stages describing change and can all be applied to mergers and acquisitions. The models depicted here are well documented in the literature and three of the four models flow from one another and were based on the original work of Lewin (1947). The first of the four models covers a current framework that is found in popular business books, magazines, online news journals, and current brochures by Pritchett (2007).

Pritchett (2007) states that employees will go through a grieving or mourning process because grief often accompanies the feeling of loss in their lives, especially during organizational change such as mergers and acquisitions. He states that there are three main stages in this emotional cycle or mourning period, and he discusses how to put these things into perspective. This conceptual framework is not focused on organizational processes per se but on how employees deal with the emotions of organizational change.

Pritchett (2007) describes the first main stage of this emotional cycle as "shock and numbness" (p. 16). Employees will enter this stage when they first hear that their organization is going to be acquired or merged. They are initially stunned, and they can be disbelieving and sometimes immobilized. After this stage, employees move into the second stage of the emotional cycle called "suffering" (p. 16). This stage is easy to

identify because as the shock of the first stage begins to wear off, employees appear to come out of the "trance," and their feelings are often more pronounced and more visible. The third stage of Pritchett's (2007) model is called "resolution" and during this phase, the organization begins to "get well" (p. 18). It is during this phase that employees collectively begin to feel better.

According to this model, this three-stage process is a normal emotional cycle all employees go through. It helps employees understand their own feelings and behaviors as well as those of their co-workers. Pritchett (2007) recommends ten survival steps to help employees navigate this difficult time in their careers: 1) control your attitude; 2) be tolerant of management mistakes; 3) expect change and be a change agent; 4) don't blame everything you don't like on the merger; 5) be prepared for "psychological soreness;" 6) get to know the other company; 7) use the merger as an opportunity for growth; 8) keep your sense of humor; 9) practice good stress management techniques; and 10) keep doing your job. Pritchett (2007) states, "There are things you personally can do right now to take charge of the situation. Do something. There is no excuse for doing nothing" (p. 35). These survival steps allow employees to move forward as opposed to sitting still and doing nothing.

Pritchett's (2007) model specifically addresses emotional changes individual go through during a merger. However, well documented in the literature is Kurt Lewin's (1947) model which focuses less on emotional reactions and more on organizational change phases and related work behaviors employees utilize during organizational change. During the World War II era, Lewin (1947) conducted studies as part of a larger effort at changing food habits in line with war needs, basically trying to influence people to eat less desirable, cheaper foods. He concluded that the change process needs to

follow a three-step procedure. This model focuses on employee work behaviors in the work place that are similar to the part of Pritchett's (2007) model that discusses ten work place survival steps.

The first stage of his model is called "unfreezing." The focus of this stage is to "unfreeze" the present level of behavior. The second stage is called "moving" which involves moving toward the new desired level of behavior in the organization. This phase or stage might involve training managers to behave differently or to implement action plans for changing work processes or improving organizational systems. The third and final stage of this model is called "refreezing" and it establishes ways to make the new level of behavior "relatively secure against change." This model looks specifically at changing organizational work behavior.

Similar to Lewin's (1947) model is Schein's (1987) model of organization change. Schein built his model based on Lewin's model and stated that the steps (stages) overlap and the process is more elaborate and complicated than the three steps that Lewin (1947) presented. Schein's model has three stages like Lewin's model, but he expanded and elaborated on each level.

At the "unfreezing" stage, Schein states that there are three ways of unfreezing an organization: disconfirmation or lack of confirmation which demonstrates the need for change; induction of guilt or anxiety where employees are shown a gap between what is and what would be better; and creation of psychological safety which involves showing employees that change will not cause feelings of embarrassment, humiliation or loss of face or self-esteem.

The second stage called "changing" is similar to Lewin's (1947) stage of "moving." Schein states that cognitive restructuring is where employees see things differently than

before, and as a result they will act differently. Two processes that are necessary at this stage include identification with a new model, mentor, leader, or consultant; and scanning the environment for new, relevant information.

"Refreezing" is the third stage and involves the integration of the change for employees, and it also has two parts. The first part is a personal and individual component where employers or managers must help the employee feel comfortable with the new behavior that is required to make the change succeed, and the second part is an interpersonal component where the employers or managers must make sure that the new behavior fits well with others who are significant in the organization and that these other significant individuals are comfortable with the new behavior from the "changed" person.

Both the Lewin (1947) and Schein (1987) models focus on work place behaviors and processes needed for organizational change to become successful. However, the Schein model elaborates on each of Lewin's stages, and within the three stages of unfreezing, moving or changing, and refreezing, Schein includes many behaviors that relate to Pritchett's (2007) model on emotions. In Schein's details, he mentions making employees feel anxiety and guilt, psychological safety, and having employees feel comfortable with change. His model includes employee emotions and cognitions embedded in the phases of organizational change.

The fourth model of organizational change also elaborates on Lewin's (1947) three step model. Ronald Lippitt's (1958) model has five phases associated with change. The first phase is called "Development" and it is described as a need for change and this phase is similar to Lewin's stage of "unfreezing." The second phase is called "Establishment of a Change Relationship" between the change agent and the

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organization. This is where Lippitt's model differs from Lewin's. Lippitt's model focuses on a change agent initiating the change in this phase and then terminating the relationship as the change agent in the fifth stage. This model then adds two stages relating to the actual work done by the "change agent." "Working toward Change" is the third phase, which is what Lewin called "moving" and Schein (1987) called "changing." The fourth phase is called "Generalization and Stabilization," which is what Lewin and Schein both called "refreezing." The final phase is called "Achieving a Termination in the Relationships" that is, ending the "change contract" between the change agent and the organization.

There are many models of organizational change that can be applied to mergers and acquisitions (Burke, 2002). The entire "systems" theory (Katz & Kahn, 1978) approach which includes many models of organizational structure and change was not reviewed because the focus of this study is to examine how managers navigate organizational change more than how the structure or processes of change occur within organizations. As stated previously, the reason these four models were chosen is because they are well documented in the literature and include phases/stages of change that organizations go through. Identifying different stages and phases helps accurately assess what employees are going through during the process of change. Pritchett's model (2007) which, is well known in the merger/acquisition industry, very accurately describes the emotional cycle that employees go through during a merger/acquisition. The three levels of emotional response give a clear conceptual framework of what mid-level managers might be experiencing in this current study. Pritchett's (2007) ten survival steps also give key behavioral recommendations for employees going through change. Lewin (1947), Schein (1987), and Lippitt (1958) describe models of change that

include phases/stages of mergers/change and may help to better explain how managers are navigating the change they are going through at any given time. Although Lewin's model focuses on job behaviors, Schein's model includes these stages but includes employee attitudes, feelings, and cognitions during these phases. In addition, Lippitt introduces the concept of a "change agent" who introduces and later disengages from the change process. Combined, all four theories help identify stages of mergers and emotional responses that employees are going through during these stages. All contribute to a better understanding of how mid-level managers are dealing with their own experiences during a merger.

<center>Coping with Organizational Change</center>

Empirical studies of organizational change related to downsizing, mergers, and acquisitions were gathered. Specifically, peer-reviewed articles directly related to employee attitudes, emotions, and behaviors following mergers and acquisitions were obtained to better understand how employees navigate such change.

Marilyn Moats Kennedy (2000) states, "one of the most interesting top management strategies to emerge from the nationwide merger mania is not trying to anchor key people before the merger, but waiting to see who stays" (p. 72). According to the author, top management on both sides counts heavily on panic-driven departures to thin the ranks and weed out many who cannot or will not accept a new culture. Kennedy says, "This strategy also saves millions in severance, not to mention tons of bad publicity. If people get other jobs, they rarely complain about the company's bad treatment" (p. 73). This idea points out that the survivors are the ones more likely to embrace the new organizational culture.

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Looking at survivors' attitudes as they embrace the new organizational culture may help practitioners predict how employees will adapt. Allen, Freeman, Reizenstein, and Rentz (1995) examined the attitudes of employees over time who survived organizational change in the form of downsizing. Results indicated that restructuring had a significant impact on attitudes such that they varied over time. In general, employee attitudes became significantly less favorable from time 1 (one month after downsizing) to time 2 (four months after downsizing). While attitudes did not significantly improve from time 2 (four months after downsizing) to time 3 (16 months after downsizing), the direction of the means indicated that attitudes were becoming more favorable from time 2 to time 3. This data indicated that the most negative attitudes occurred during the immediate post-impact stage of downsizing. These findings relate to Pritchett's (2007) model stating that shock and numbness along with suffering occur earlier than the stage of resolution when the organization begins to "get well."

Career stage was tested as a moderator in this study. The researchers found that career stage moderated the effect of time on organizational commitment and role overload. Managers in their early-career period were more negatively impacted by organizational restructuring than mid-career managers, at least during the immediate post-restructuring phase. The researchers interpreted this to mean one of three things: either early-career managers may have had higher expectations for their job and their firm, or mid-career survivors may have seen more organizational change over the years and were less affected by them than the early-career survivors, or mid-career individuals may have held higher-level positions in the organization and may have had more access

to knowledge about the details of the restructuring. Since this was a quantitative study, the reasons for these career stage differences were only hypothesized.

This study provided field research examining attitude change over time. These empirical findings have added to the literature. The findings show that restructuring seems to have an impact on work attitudes, and the impact varies over time with the initial impact generally negative. This empirical study matches with Pritchett's (2007) model as well. Initially the emotional cycle he describes is shock, numbness, and suffering. It also gives insight into emotional attitudes of employees during organizational change and shows that different kinds of employees at different times in their career paths (early career, versus mid-career) might experience organizational change in different ways.

Examining attitudes over time as Allen, Freeman, Reizenstein, and Rentz (1995) did, described how individuals cope with change over time. Another study that looked at coping strategies over time was done by Begley (1998). He examined coping strategies and situational stressors as predictors of employee distress and turnover following an organizational consolidation. He looked at six coping strategies: action planning, positive reinterpretation, acceptance, seeking emotional social support, intention to quit, and using alcohol or drugs. The six coping strategies were assessed three months prior to and in response to an organizational consolidation. The two stressors in this study were the extent to which a unit was affected by the consolidation and consolidated-related stress. Two indicators of distress, mental distress and somatic complaints, were measured at three time periods: three months prior to, shortly after, and six months after the consolidation.

Results indicated that consolidation was found to be stressful, and intention to quit and consolidation stress predicted mental distress while positive reinterpretation, use of alcohol or drugs and lower unit impact predicted somatic complaints shortly after the consolidation. Six months later, the main predictor of mental distress and somatic complaints was use of alcohol and drugs. Turnover was best predicted by a pre-consolidation indicator of intent to quit and post-consolidation indicator of lack of acceptance of the consolidation. The author concluded that relatively little is known about coping with major organizational restructurings such as acquisition, consolidations, and downsizing. The coping strategies tested in this study were recommended as effective stress alleviators in other stressful circumstances.

These two studies looked directly at coping strategies used by employees (Begley, 1998) and attitudes of employees at various times before, during and after mergers (Allen, Freeman, Reizenstein, and Rentz, 1995). Taken together they indicate that people employ different coping strategies at different times in their careers and at different times during a merger process. These findings tie in with Buono and Bowditch's (2001) definition of mergers and acquisitions as having a life of their own with shifting periods of waiting and frenzied activities, a sense of escalating momentum, cascading minor changes, rising tensions and conflicts, and stressful uncertainties. This follows some of the earlier models discussed by Pritchett (2007) addressing emotional cycles, and the models by Lewin (1947), Lippett (1958), and Schein (1987) which all indicated stages and phases of mergers. Buono and Bowditch (2001) found that to gain control of such situations, managers often develop a crisis mentality and a nearsightedness to merger-related problems that affects virtually all their decisions. Many managers pursue narrow-minded "solutions" to their problems.

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These authors recommend a new approach that revolves around the following

areas listed in Table 1 below.

Table 1.   Strategies for Successful Mergers (Buono and Bowditch (2001)

- Competing Claims

- Secrecy versus Deception

- Coercion versus Participation

- Management of Grief, Loss, and Termination

- Respect for employee as Individuals

Note.   From Ethical considerations in merger and acquisition: A human resource perspective," by A. F

   Buono, and J. F. Bowditch, J. F., 1990, *SAM Advanced Management Journal, 55*(4), 18.

Relating to "Competing Claims," mergers and acquisitions involve multiple parties, each

with separate interests and needs. These authors recommend that managers should

have a broader view with a "stakeholder" emphasis rather than individual "stockholder"

interests. They recommend cultural pluralism and cultural blending. The idea

involving "Secrecy versus Deception" relates to the notion that tensions can arise in

communication between the managed release of information in an open, honest, and

timely manner versus the controlled release of information to distort the truth and

manipulate people. The authors recommend realistic "merger previews" with

presentations, workshops, and hotlines. They state that two-way communication is

more effective than one-way communication.   "Coercion versus Participation" is the

idea that mergers and acquisitions may be different regarding the extent to which

people are forced into certain situations or provided with a true opportunity to take part

in discussions and decisions. The authors are recommending that there be "transition teams" and "team building" exercises. They also state that merger oversight structures should be put in place and there should be survey feedback to continually readjust processes where needed. The fourth area of concern is "Management of Grief, Loss, and Termination." The ways in which grief, loss, and termination are handled have a significant impact on employee attitudes. Based on this model, Buono and Bowditch (2001) recommend that there be focused efforts to counsel employees and to include merger-related workshops. To them, it seems easiest on everyone if there is a reduction in force through attrition and voluntary separation when applicable. Including a supportive outplacement assistance program will help people get over the grief, loss, and termination.   Finally, the last area of concern "Respect for Employees as Individuals" relates to the level of respect for organizational members and other key constituents as individuals. This is described as a "key determinant of commitment." The authors recommend that there should be a high balance between questions of fairness and individual rights and broader company/stockholder/stakeholder needs. All employees have a moral right to be treated with respect and dignity.

The study identifies that mergers have less than a 50-50 chance of succeeding, and many failures are increasingly attributed to mismanagement of human resources. The authors' state:

> By ignoring the rights of organizational members or questions of justice in
> dealing with them, managers precipitate unrest, increased dissatisfaction
> and alimentation, and lowered commitment and work efforts. By
> attending to these issues, the result can be more constructive employee

attitudes, work efforts and, ultimately, improved productivity and

profitability. (p. 22)

Clearly this research includes the perspective of the Pritchett (2007) model that

describes the emotional cycle that employees go through. The emphasis of this research

is clearly on "human resource efforts" to keep valuable employees by looking at all the

issues that may influence employee emotions, attitudes, work efforts, and ultimately,

productivity and profitability.

Open communications seems to be an effective tool for dealing with each of the

areas discussed above by Buono and Bowditch (2001). Similarly focusing on open

communications, Schweiger and Denisi (1991) examined the impact of a realistic merger

preview and a program of realistic communications on employees of an organization

that had just announced a merger. In their study, employees in one plant received a

merger preview while those in another plant received limited information. The

researchers collected survey feedback on four different occasions. The data revealed

that those employees that were given a realistic merger preview program had reduced

dysfunctional outcomes from the merger. Those effects continued over the duration of

the study which was a longitudinal study over several months. In some cases, measured

attributes returned to levels comparable to their levels before the merger was

announced. These findings coincide with the findings mentioned above in the study by

Buono, and Bowditch (2001) in which merger previews, presentations, communications

and other sources of feedback are important components of successful managerial

techniques to be used in mergers.

Another managerial technique that assists managers in successful mergers is

their ability to take initiative to help their employees manage through the difficult

transition period (Schweiger, Ivancevich, & Power, 1987). In their qualitative study, the

authors found that managers who take control of their personal situation can be very

effective. In some cases, organization-wide programs helped but that was not found to

be enough. Actions initiated by managers were found to be imperative. According to

the authors, if the human resource side of the acquisition is to be positive, then

managers must make decisions that clearly show employees that someone is concerned

with their welfare, appreciates their loyalty and commitment, and is willing to seek out

and point toward future opportunities that can heal the wounds that the sense of loss of

attachments brought about by the acquisition event. The five major employee concerns

that surfaced from the qualitative interviews were: loss of identity, lack of information

and anxiety, survival becomes an obsession, lost talent, and family repercussions. These

authors found that the most important characteristic of an effective manager was

reported as "remaining committed to one's employees and serving as a companion" (p.

133). This article like the previous two articles indicates once again the importance of

the active role of managers in the merger and the importance of communication with

employees with a focus on helping employees get through the emotional outcomes of a

merger.

Sometimes, employees perceive organizational change as negative, and their

reactions are cynical. Focusing on cynicism about organizational change, Reichers,

Wanous, and Austin (1997) found that cynicism about organizational change often

combines pessimism about the likelihood of successful change with blame of those

responsible for change as incompetent, lazy, or both. Data from this study suggest

factors that contribute to the development of such cynicism: 1) A history of change

programs that are not consistently successful; 2) A lack of adequate information about

change; 3) A predisposition to cynicism. Results also suggested that cynicism about changes have negative consequences for the commitment, satisfaction, and motivation of employees. The authors suggest a host of managing techniques to minimize cynicism about change, which includes the following techniques that have already been highlighted by previous literature findings: keep people involved in making decisions that affect them; emphasize and reward supervisors for their efforts to communicate; keep people informed; enhance the effectiveness of timing; keep surprises to a minimum; enhance credibility with credible spokespersons, positive logical appeals and multiple channels and repetition; deal with the past; publicize successful changes; see change from the employees' perspective; and finally, provide opportunities to air feelings.

Instead of focusing on cynicism as noted above by Reichers, Wanous, and Austin (1997), Marks and Mirvis (1992) described and analyzed rare cases of mergers in which a merger was managed competently and the integration proved successful. Their research focused on rebuilding after the merger and focused on dealing with "survivor sickness." Marks and Mirvis (1992) studied a system of investing time in systematic post-merger team building. They found that if managers do not invest in post-merger team building, they will pay through the loss of key talent and disappointing results. They spoke in terms of mergers having phases called pre-merger, during transition, and post-merger. They also discussed the complicated feelings of people who "mourn the loss of laid-off co-workers and suffer from survivor's guilt" (p. 27). In discussing their "team-building" program they bring in the emotional well-being of the employees and discuss sources of resistance and how to counter resistance. This article clearly goes

along with the Pritchett (2007) model that discusses the emotional cycle of employees during such transitions.

Following this early research, Marks (2003) discussed the difficulty of mergers in his book entitled *Charging Back Up the Hill: Workplace Recovery after Mergers, Acquisitions, and Downsizings.* He discusses that mergers, acquisitions, and downsizings are very difficult to manage, stating "75% of all corporate combinations fail" (p. 18). He lists why such events are "wired for mismanagement" (p. 18). He includes descriptions of inadequate vision, inadequate communication, inadequate resources, inadequate teamwork, and inadequate planning. In addition, he talks about the psychological reactions to transition that include many of the emotional reactions that Pritchett (2007) refers to: survivor syndrome, loss of confidence in management, cynicism and distrust, decreased morale, reduced loyalty, dismal outlook, and loss of control. Included in Marks' (2003) book are some of the behavioral reactions that employees often resort to using during times of transition, such as working harder (quantity over quality of work), lack of direction, risk avoidance, political behavior, role ambiguity, and withdrawal. His book lays the groundwork for what he calls a "good recovery." This good recovery includes building upon the model discussed earlier in this paper that was developed by Lewin (1947). He discusses using the simple model proposed by Lewin for change management: unfreezing, changing, and refreezing. When applying this to mergers, he describes the unfreezing portion as the time to change present attitudes and behaviors. In the present study focused on a three college merger, this unfreezing applies to the pre-merger introduction of the idea of three colleges coming together to merge as one college. This would include specific reasoning of who, what, when, and why as part of the introduction to the idea of a merger

approaching. The second stage of changing applied to a merger might involve experiential learning through official meetings, planning for changes within the colleges and clearly defining that the three colleges will come together as one college, with one president, one leadership team, and one set of policies and procedures necessary to run such a tremendous college. The third step of refreezing includes "establishing processes that reinforce the desired behaviors or perceptions and lock them into the organization" (p. 58). Marks (2003) states, "Unless the refreezing occurs, it is all too easy for organizations and their people to slip back into familiar and accustomed patterns" (p. 59). In the current study, this refreezing is critical to success otherwise employees would simply believe that they were three independent colleges conducting business as usual. If handled correctly, "A merger can be successful despite the way that change often disrupts the status quo, jars people and changes not only the work place operations but the organizational culture as well" (p. 73). He also encourages companies to build in opportunities for a new organizational order.   Successful transitions and mergers have limitless opportunities. Leaders may seek to enhance teamwork, customer service, innovation, risk taking, use of technology, speed to market, or other characteristics of organizational life. Offering these opportunities to employees, results in a wide range of benefits to any work organization (p.73). See Table 2 below for a detailed list of opportunities in the new organization that Marks offers organizations.

Table 2.   Opportunities in the New Organizational Order

Resuscitating the Human Spirit
- Reenergize burned-out employees.
- Create a high level of aspiration.
- Focus people on future possibilities.
- Increase the capacity to act.

Living the Vision
- Rally people around a vision.
- Clarify their mission.
- Set operating guidelines.
- Focus people on what matters.
- Prioritize competing demands.

Renewing Human Resources
- Strengthen-the-pay-for-performance link.
- Enhance selection systems.
- Invest in training and development.

Helping Middle Managers
- Make sense of the chaos.
- Define the role of middle management.
- Help middle managers regain their footing.

Enhancing Work Methods
- Enhance creativity.
- Provide problem-solving skills.
- Embrace experimentation.
- Increase appropriate levels of risk taking.

Promoting Organizational Learning
- Embed double-loop learning.
- Create diagnostic opportunities
- Increase upward, downward, and lateral communication.

Note: From: *Charging back up the hill: Workplace recovery after mergers, acquisitions, and*

downsizings (p. 73), by M. L. Marks, 2003, San Francisco: Jossey-Bass.

The opportunities listed above must revolve around key leadership and management fundamentals. For leaders and managers to implement organizational change, they must utilize the elements listed below in Table 3 to move the corporation forward. Often transition programs are "future oriented," and they fail to consider that people in the workplace are not ready to let go and move on immediately. To move forward in leading and managing work place recovery, Marks (2003) encourages the four elements for success; their definitions appear in Table 3 below.

Table 3.   The Four Elements of Workplace Recovery

1. Empathy as an Element of Recovery

    Let people know leadership acknowledges that it has been difficult, currently is difficult, and will continue to be difficult for awhile

2. Engagement as an Element of Recovery

    Create understanding and support for the need to end the old and accept the new organizational order.

3. Energy as an Element of Organizational Recovery

    Get people excited about the new organizational order and support them in realizing it.

4. Enforcement as an Element of Workplace Recovery

    Solidify new mental models that are congruent with the desired new organizational order.

Note: From: *Charging back up the hill: Workplace recovery after mergers, acquisitions, and downsizings*, by M. L. Marks, 2003, San Francisco: Jossey-Bass.

Marks (2003) wrote his book based on research gathered from small start-up companies to large multinational firms.   Clients included: Pfizer, America Online, Intel, Motorola, AT&T, Lockheed Martin, Unisys, Hewlett-Packard, Lucent Technologies,

Abbott Laboratories, BP Amoco, Phillips Petroleum, Citibank, the March of Dimes, American Airlines, and Delta Airlines among others. Marks uses Lewin's (1947) model on organizational change and integrates the model taking a positive viewpoint. He focuses on using the model to explain the phases of organizational change and how to implement a recovery program that will make the merger or acquisition a positive success. Marks (2003) uses the third stage, "refreezing," of Lewin's (1947) mode as a foundation for building an effective recovery program. The following clearly exemplifies what must be done for successful mergers.

> Organizational leaders must try to be as consistent as possible in sending messages to employees. This means ensuring that systems, structures, and jobs are aligned to reinforce the desired end state. It also means understanding employees' needs and issues as the employees adapt to transition. Tremendous patience is required to recover from transition and revitalize human spirit and work team performance in the workplace. People will not accept the new until they let go of the old. They need time to pass through denial, anger, and other reactions to loss, as well as to move through the phases of ending the old, dealing with hang time, and experimenting and getting comfortable with the new. However, this time required for adaptation presents a rare opportunity, after people have been unfrozen by the turmoil of transition, to cast a new mold and refreeze attitudes and behaviors congruent with the desired new organizational order. To achieve these opportunities to the fullest extent possible, leaders must proactively help people recover from the unintended consequences

of transition and regain the self-confidence and motivation needed to

triumph in their charge up the hill to capture the prize that awaits. (p. 256)

Relating to the topic of resistance, Lewin (1947) also discusses individual

responses to change. According to Lewin, the phenomenon of resistance to change is

not necessarily that of resisting the change per se but is more accurately a resistance to

losing something of value to the person – loss of the known and tried. There are several

types of resistance: Blind Resistance where one finds a small minority who are simply

afraid and intolerant of any change; Political Resistance where people involved in

change stand to lose something of value such as a loss of one's own power base, status,

job, income and son on; and Ideological Resistance where some people believe that the

change is ill fated or that the change is a violation of deeply held values. It seems evident

from these last three studies, plus Marks' (2003) culmination of research on many

companies, that cynicism with mergers, successful team building programs, and merger

preview programs, as well as studies focused on resistance, all point to the importance

of understanding the needs and emotions behind employees as they go through these

merger transition phases.

These empirical findings in the field are related to employees managing, coping

and navigating organizational change including mergers. The studies often overlapped

with many common findings and themes running through them. In general, employee

attitudes are less favorable after a merger (Allen, Freeman, Reizenstein, & Rentz ,1995),

and career stage can modify these effects with mid-career managers dealing more

successfully with this stress. Begley (1998) found that consolidation was stressful and

was often followed by both mental distress and somatic complaints among employees.

Buono and Bowditch (2001) described mergers and acquisitions as having a life of their

own with shifting periods of waiting and frenzied activities, a sense of escalating momentum, cascading minor changes, rising tensions and conflicts, and stressful uncertainties. They suggested many techniques that managers should use for survival. These techniques included communication, realistic pre-merger workshops, presentations, hot-lines, and team-building. These same techniques were mentioned in other studies of mergers (Marks, 2003; Marks & Mirvis, 1992; Reichers, Wanous, & Autin, 1997; Schweiger & Denisi, 1991; Schweiger, Ivancevich, & Power, 1987). All of the studies reviewed included aspects of employee responses to organizational change in terms of attitudes and emotions. These articles all had something in common with the framework presented by Pritchett (2007): Pritchett mentioned that employees go through an "emotional cycle" dealing with shock and numbness, suffering, and resolution. The literature reviewed so far offers many management techniques to successfully deal with these employee reactions of emotions. The next section of the literature review also covers management techniques that may motivate and satisfy employees navigating their way through a merger.

<div align="center">Mini-theories of Job Satisfaction and Motivation</div>

Mini-theories (as opposed to larger conceptual frameworks or models) discussed here relate to how individuals manage change in organizations. Mini-theories in the literature describe how an individual might find job motivation or job satisfaction in the work place. These theories focus on one or a few aspects of the work place and do not discuss the broader environment within the organization. For example, a mini-theory might describe how "job re-design" might make an employee more satisfied with their organizational contribution. It does not take into account the myriad of variables that impact on worker satisfaction or motivation, thus they are called mini-theories. They all

take an individual approach in describing how employees might deal or cope with organizational change such as a merger. Some of these theories can be thought of as techniques suggested for managers or employees to use to enhance job motivation and satisfaction, but they also offer explanations of how individuals in the work place might be dealing with the change thrust upon them from a merger or acquisition. They add insightful descriptions of how mid-level managers help themselves and their employees navigate change, which is the focus of the current study. These mini-theories have been reviewed in Burke's (2002) *Organization Change Theory and Practice* and Bess and Dee's (2008) *Understanding College and University Organization: Theories for Effective Policy and Practice.*

Maslow's (1954) Need theory focuses on motivation and Herzberg's (1966) Two-Factor theory focuses on job satisfaction. Both of these theories relate to how employees can be motivated and satisfied related to mergers. Applying Maslow's (1954) Need theory would be related to motivation towards doing one's job. The process of applying the theory, according to Burke (2002), would be for enriching individual's jobs, providing autonomy, recognition and achievement opportunities, and empowering employees by giving them more authority and decision-making abilities. Burke (2002) contends that applying Herzberg's Two-Factor (1966) theory would be related to the degree of job satisfaction employees feel before, during and after the merger, and the process of applying the theory would be the same as for Maslow's theory - for enriching individual's jobs, providing autonomy, recognition and achievement opportunities, and empowering employees by giving them more authority and decision-making abilities (Burke, 2002).

Vroom (1964) and later Lawler (1973) developed V-I-E theory, which focuses on worker motivation and addresses the key terms of Valence, Instrumentality, and Expectancy. Valence in this theory means that outcomes in the workplace hold different values for different people. Instrumentality describes how people relate their behavior to certain probabilities of success. Instrumentality refers to a certain level of performance for example which will lead to a probability of success, effort-performance expectancy. Finally, people believe that their behavior is related to certain outcomes which are called expectancies in the theory; they use the logic that if they engage in certain behaviors, they will expect certain outcomes. Burke (1994) summarized this application (to mergers) as "People will be highly motivated when they believe that their behavior will lead to certain rewards, that these rewards are worthwhile and valuable and that they are able to perform at a level that will result in the attainment of the rewards" (p. 157). This indicates that if these cognitions are occurring during a merger, then some employees will experience a positive outcome. If employees do not see the connections to behaviors, outcomes, and rewards, then they will not see the merger as a positive event.

Hackman and Oldham (1980) worked with both need and expectancy theory and stated that there are three psychological states that affect employee satisfaction: Experienced meaningfulness of the work itself; Experienced responsibility for the work and its outcomes; and Knowledge of results, that is, performance feedback. The focus for mergers, as elaborated by Burke (2002), is on work and job design, making jobs, and roles for employees that enhance these three psychological states. This in turn will impact on employee motivation and job performance. Once again, these psychological states emphasize how employees feel about their jobs and how they perceive their work.

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Positive Reinforcement theory (Skinner, 1948) is another mini-theory related to worker motivation and satisfaction. It is based on behavior and understanding how to control the work environment. According to Burke (2002), this theory can apply to mergers by reward systems related to organizational change. In terms of mergers, this theory can be related to the work environment by focusing on the intent of controlling the conditions of how employees are rewarded in the work place.

One mini-theory relates specifically to how managers deal with employees they supervise and how they can make their employees more motivated and satisfied on the job. Likert's (1967) Participative Management theory focuses on management approaches: autocratic management, benevolent autocracy, consultative management, and participative management. Likert focuses on how these management approaches can be used within organizational functions such as goal setting, communication, interaction and influence, decision-making, leadership, motivation, and control. Using a survey and survey feedback, data is gathered and given back to organizational units. The feedback can lead to direction and objectives of a change effort. Likert (1967) argued that "participative management" was the one best way to manage and that "survey feedback" was the tool to understand how organizational "units" behaved and what the "ideal" situation should be. The data leads change efforts.

Different from Likert's model, Lawrence and Lorsch (1967) argued there is no one best way for management, for strategy, for structure, or for how to deal with systems and processes in the organization. It all depends on the three following areas: the organization's relationships with its external environment; the relationships of units within the organization; and the relationship or implicit contract between the organizational member and the organization. Applying this model to mergers, Burke

(2002) states it would be important to emphasize internal restructuring, conflict management and resolution, and how all of the above affect the relationship between management and the employee (described in Burke, 2002).

Finally, Levinson's (1972) theory states that organizations have personalities. The healthy functioning of the organization is similar to the healthy functioning of a person. It focuses on how integrated the parts of the organization are. For organization change and improvement, first the behavior of top executives is diagnosed according to family dynamics. In an analogy of family, Levinson would point to the top executive as the "parents" of the organization. Then the focus looks at how the top-family dynamics affect and are replicated throughout the organization. Using the analogy of family, it would be interpreted as how parents relate to their children in a family is similar to how top executives relate to their subordinates. Lastly, it looks at how integrated the various parts of the organization are. The model also looks at stress levels of top executives and at stress levels throughout the organization and how stress is dealt with. The theory also includes a look at energy levels of employees and distinguishes the balance of energy directed toward goal accomplishment compared with energy directed at dealing with stress. All of these are key factors that can be applied to mergers and acquisitions.

These eight mini-theories of job satisfaction and worker motivation can be used to help describe and explain mid-level manager's reactions and coping mechanisms going through a merger. No one theory is necessarily comprehensive to explain all feelings, emotions, cognitions, and attitudes of mangers going through a merger, but together they help to explore how mid-level managers navigate change in the work place. All eight theories show ways that the work in the organization can be designed to enhance employee motivation and job satisfaction. All eight theories discuss ways that

employees connect their efforts to outcomes and thus their perceptions of rewards in the workplace. Individually, each theory can be applied as a management technique to assist mid-level managers in helping their employees navigate change in the work place. Burke (2002) tied each of these theories directly into situations of mergers and acquisitions and showed the direct relationships on how these theories may possibly operate within organizations undergoing a merger.

The purpose of this current research study is to understand how mid-level managers navigate through the merging of three technical colleges within the Technical College System of Georgia. All three of the areas reviewed have contributed to understanding how employees behave before, during and after a merger.

This literature review allows readers to understand that mergers and organizational change occur in phases and stages. Understanding the emotional cycle and the types of feelings, behaviors, and emotions that employees go through during a merger help to explain how these current mid-level managers might navigate change. In addition, field studies on coping from the literature give us insight of strategies and consequences employed in the business world during mergers. How employees cope and what programs business and industry use to help employees adjust to organizational change shows where future research needs to continue.

Lastly, studies from the literature on worker motivation and job satisfaction specifically indicate that individuals react differently and assess situations differently. It directs researchers to look closely at what motivates and satisfies individual workers in the work place. The strategies used by practitioners in the work place may enhance motivation and job satisfaction and can be directly applied during mergers and acquisitions to help their employees navigate a merger more successfully.

After reading the relevant literature, I found that there is a continued need to better understand how mid-level managers navigate through the merger process. There is also a continued need to better understand how these same mid-level managers assist their own employees successfully through the merger process. The results of this study as previously mentioned should be of interest to higher education administrators throughout the technical college system in Georgia and throughout higher education in our country. In addition, the results of this study will add to the empirical findings from business and industry on the nature of mergers and acquisitions.

Most importantly, the field research reviewed in this paper focused on quantitative studies that manipulated one or a few variables related to coping with a merger. There are very few in-depth case studies that are comprehensive stories that tell the process of how mid-level managers navigate themselves and their employees through the stages and phases of a merger. In addition the job satisfaction and motivation mini-theories are techniques used in everyday work place settings and have not been empirically tested or qualitatively reported in merger situations. Does the present study reveal any such techniques utilized by mid-level managers during their own merger experiences? The present study will add depth to this area of research.

CHAPTER THREE

RESEARCH DESIGN

This chapter begins with a discussion of why a qualitative case study is the most appropriate method design for this study. In employing a qualitative approach, I will describe who my participants were, how I collected the data, and what methods I used to analyze the data and explore the trustworthiness of the research design by including descriptions of validity and reliability, as well as the role and scope of the researcher with a subjectivity statement.

In studying the important roles that mid-level managers play in a merger that encompasses three technical colleges, I deemed these two questions as the most critical to my study:

1. How do mid-level managers navigate the merger process, in other words, how do they "survive" the merger?

2. How do they guide and mange their own employees as they go through this organizational change?

Case Study Design

I employed a case study as described by Merriam (1998) as, "an intensive, holistic description and analysis of a single instance, phenomenon, or social unit" (p. 27). It is a bounded system and can be used with other types of qualitative studies such as basic or generic research. In a basic or generic qualitative study, the research includes a description, interpretation, and understanding as well as identifying recurrent patterns

in the form of themes or categories and/or delineates a process. Merriam (1998) further

notes that "qualitative research is based on the view that reality is constructed by

individual interacting with their social worlds" (p.6). She further defines qualitative

research with a quote from Sherman and Webb (1988):

> Qualitative researchers are interested in understanding the meaning
>
> people have constructed, that is, how they make sense of their world and
>
> the experiences they have in the world. Qualitative research "implies a
>
> direct concern with experience as it is 'lived' or 'felt' or 'undergone'". (p. 7)

The key concern of qualitative research is to understand the phenomenon of interest

from the participants' perspectives, not the researcher's. This is commonly referred to as

the *emic,* or insider's perspective, versus the *etic,* or outsider's view. With this research

design, the researcher is the primary instrument for data collection and analysis. Thus

data is not collected through a survey, inventory, questionnaire, or computer. All data is

collected through the human researcher. The researcher is thus able to adapt to the

context and adapt techniques to the circumstances as required (Merriam, 1998).

Included in this research design is the notion that this research is conducted in the field

where the researcher is able to observe behavior in its natural setting.

Qualitative research employs an inductive research strategy thereby building

abstractions, concepts, hypotheses, or theories rather than testing existing theories.

Since the researcher is not testing a hypothesis deduced from a theory, he/she is

building toward theory from observations and intuitive understandings gained from

field experience (Merriam, 1998). The result of this research design will be a product

that is thick and rich in description with its focus on process, meaning, and

understanding. The product will contain the following:

Words and pictures rather than numbers are used to convey what the
researcher has learned about a phenomenon. There are likely to be
researcher descriptions of the context, the players involved, and the
activities of interest. In addition, data in the form of participants' own
words, direct citations from documents, excerpts of videotapes, and so on,
are likely to be included to support the findings of the study (p.8).

Case studies are differentiated from other types of qualitative research in that
they are intensive descriptions and analyses of a single unit or bounded system. A case
study design is used to gain in-depth understanding of the situation and meaning for
those involved. According to Merriam (1998), "The interest is in process, rather than
outcomes, in context rather than a specific variable, in discovery rather than
confirmation. Insights gleaned from case studies can directly influence policy, practice,
and future research" (p. 19). In Stake's (1995) definition of a case study, he focuses on
trying to pinpoint the unit of study. Yin (2009), however, defines a case study in terms
of the research process, "an empirical inquiry that investigates a contemporary
phenomenon in depth and within its real-life context, especially when the boundaries
between phenomenon and context are not clearly evident" (p.18). Merriam (2002)
clearly states that the single most defining characteristic of a case study research design
lies in the delimiting of the object of study, the case.

Interviewees who participated in the face-to-face interviews were also asked to
review the transcripts of the digitally recorded tapes and hand written notes to verify
that they were correct. They were asked to verify that the researcher understood the
"meanings" behind the comments. The researcher asked subjects in a subsequent
member check\follow-up interview if all the ideas the managers wanted to convey were

captured in the data. These member checks took place after the initial interviews were completed and the transcripts were ready for review. Once the dissertation study was over the tapes were erased. These member checks will be described again below in the section entitled credibility.

Participants and Interview Sites

I used purposeful sampling which Merriam (2001) and Patton (1990) describe as the most common form of sampling for qualitative research studies. Purposeful sampling is based on the assumption that researchers want to "discover, understand, and gain insight and therefore must select a sample from which the most can be learned" (Merriam, 2002, p. 61). Similarly, Patton (1990) describes purposeful sampling in these terms "the logic and power of purposeful sampling lie in selecting *information-rich cases* for study in depth. Information-rich cases are those from which one can learn a great deal about issues of central importance to the purpose of the inquiry, thus the term *purposeful* sampling" (p.169).

Lincoln and Guba (1985) recommended sampling to the point of saturation or redundancy. They stated, "In purposeful sampling the size of the sample is determined by informational considerations. That means, sampling is terminated when no new information is forthcoming from newly sampled units" (p. 202). I thought that 10-12 mid-level managers would most likely have been the magic number to reach saturation as this number represents approximately 63% of the mid-level manager positions at the newly merged college. As it turned out, I reached saturation after 10 in-depth interviews. The 10 mid-level managers came from the pool of mid-level managers including the following positions: academic deans, student services directors and coordinators, and mid-level managers from non-academic areas of the college (i.e.,

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maintenance, technology, college relations). They were selected from the total pool of mid-level managers from all three of the merging colleges. The actual 10 directors who were chosen from this pool are not described by their exact position from this list in order to keep their answers confidential. This list is thus bigger than the actual ten mid-level managers who were chosen. The interviews were conducted individually at the seven campuses that make up the newly merged college, depending on where the subject's home campus was located, and each interview lasted approximately one hour. More specifically, I interviewed each candidate in a comfortable setting near his or her campus, most over lunch in a neutral setting in order to let him or her know that this was not a formal interrogation. Two individuals could not go to lunch, and they agreed to meet me on campus for an interview. Both acknowledged they were comfortable being interviewed on campus. Eight subjects were interviewed in restaurants over lunch. These 10 subjects were experienced mid-level managers before the merger and were assigned to positions of mid-level management after the merger. No individuals were interviewed who received a domotion in title or a promotion from before the merger. Some individuals who were promoted due to the merger reorganization may not have supervised other employees prior to the merger. They may not have had the experience in their respective institutions as mid-level managers. The net result was that the ten mid-level managers all had been mid-level managers before the merger. They knew how to supervise employees and they were able to navigate themselves and their employees successfully through the merger. The interviews contained frank discussions of their individual journies through the merger. All interviews were told to me in chronological order. They discussed their brief history before the merger, the

events that took place leading up to and during the merger, and of course how they were navigating themselves and their employess post-merger.

Upon permission of the subjects, the interview was digitally recorded for more precise transcript analysis. To maintain confidentiality, the notes from the interviews were transcribed as interviewee one, interviewee two, and interviewee three and so on. The transcripts did not have the participant's names on them, and all information was kept completely confidential. When the dissertation study was complete the digital tapes were erased and the data remains labeled as interviewee one, interviewee two, and interviewee three in the copy of the reports that I am keeping of my research.

<center>Data Collection Methods</center>

The main method of data collection was the interviews. Qualitative interviews are the basic tool for investigative reporters doing qualitative research. The most common form of qualitative interview is the person-to-person encounter in which one person elicits information from another (Merriam, 1998). Rubin and Rubin (1995) state, "Qualitative interviewers listen to people as they describe how they understand the worlds in which they live and work" (p. 3). The main purpose of an interview is to obtain a special kind of information. The researcher wants to find out what is "in and on someone else's mind" (Patton, 1990, p. 278). As Patton states:

> We interview people to find out from them those things we cannot directly
> observe...We cannot observe feelings, thoughts, and intentions. We
> cannot observe behaviors that took place at some previous point in time.
> We cannot observe situations that preclude the presence of an observer.
> We cannot observe how people have organized the world and the
> meanings they attach to what goes on in the world. We have to ask people

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questions about those things. The purpose of interviewing, then, is to allow us to enter into the other person's perspective. (p. 196)

An informed consent form was used for each interviewee. No harm or risk was identified in this study. Interviewees were asked to respond to questions about their experiences prior to, during, and after the merger. If subjects felt uncomfortable about the nature of the interview, they were told it would be stopped immediately. The preliminary research questions are the first two questions below. Subsequent questions listed below followed if the participants were having trouble answering the first two questions. It should be noted that all of the subjects were very happy to comply, and all were very articulate about their experiences. I needed little probing of any of them. Their stories unfolded in a chronological and analytical progression. They began their stories and told them passionately, enthusiastically, and thoroughly. Questions nine and ten evolved after the first interview and were asked of all the subsequent nine subjects. It is described as an "Ah Ha" moment in my results section and will be elaborated on in Chapter Four.

Preliminary Questions:

1. How did you as a mid-level manager navigate the merger process, in other words, how did you "survive" the merger?

2. How did you guide and mange your own employees as they went through this organizational change?

Subsequent Questions:

3. Tell me about the events leading up to the recent merger?

4. Tell me your survival story?

5. What were some of the "bumps" in the road?

6. How you have "coped" with the changes brought about by the merger?

7. Tell me how things are different? How things are the same?

8. What will you take away with you as you look back on this period of

   organizational change?

Comparative Analysis Added Question

9. Tell me if you feel the college has healed. If not, how long do you think it will

   take for the college to be healed?

10. Tell me if you think you are moving forward and you are healed from this

    merger.

<div align="center">Data Analysis Procedure</div>

The digitally recorded interviews were transcribed and put into word documents which were used to analyze the transcripts into themes and sub-themes (Rubin and Rubin, 2005). Once themes or sub-themes emerged from the first few interviews, I re-evaluated my interview questions and introduced further questions that might clarify the themes that had begun to emerge from the earlier interviews. This is what Merriam (2002) refers to as the constant comparative method of data analysis.

This type of data analysis involves comparing one segment of data with

another to determine similarities and differences. Data are then grouped

together on a similar dimension. This dimension is tentatively given a

name; it then becomes a category. The overall object of this analysis is to

seek patterns in the data. These patterns are arranged in relationship to

each other in the building of a grounded theory. (p. 18)

Once emerging themes were identified, I used them with the interviewees during the member checks in order to confirm accuracy and clarification. The themes were used in

later interviews to see if further similarities existed among the latter participants' experiences. These themes and data analyses will be further discussed in the results section this study.

<center>Trustworthiness of the Data</center>

Conventionally, the criteria for judging the quality of research are the terms internal validity, external validity, reliability, and objectivity (Lincoln & Guba, 1985). However, the criteria for assessing validity and reliability using qualitative research are different than the criteria used in assessing quantitative research. In regards to trustworthiness of qualitative data, Firestone (1987) states:

> The quantitative study must convince the reader that procedures have been followed faithfully because very little concrete description of what anyone does is provided. The qualitative study provides the reader with a depiction in enough detail to show that the author's conclusion 'makes sense.' (p. 19)

Merriam (1998, p. 200) uses the following definition from Kemmis (1983) when describing the validity of qualitative case study research: "In the case study the observer's critical presence in the context of occurrence of phenomena, observation, hypothesis-testing (by confrontation and disconfirmation), triangulation of participants' perceptions, interpretations and so on" (Kemmis, p. 103).

In a similar fashion, Creswell (2007, 2003) and Toma (2005), discuss the research rigor in "qualitative case studies." Qualitative researchers "reject ideals such as perfection and objectivity-as well as fully discovering some truth and reality" (Toma, 2005, p. 405). In his paper *Approaching Rigor in Applied Qualitative Research,* Toma clearly indicates that each researcher must adopt their own rigor in their research. It will

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differ for the type of qualitative research that one is conducting. In using applied

qualitative research, there are different standards used to judge rigor than the ones

discussed above for quantitative research. Instead of discussing "validity," Toma (2005)

cites Creswell (2003) who used the term "verification" to describe the extensive time in

the field, thick description, and closeness to participants that are the hallmarks of

qualitative research. Both researchers adopt the concepts of "trustworthiness and

authenticity to describe the strength of their research. Toma (2005) also indicates that

both trustworthiness and authenticity can be defined in terms of the following four

concepts: 1) credibility, 2) transferability, 3) dependability, and 4) confirmability. This

qualitative case study will adopt the same terms to discuss the rigor of the research.

Credibility

Credibility deals with the issue of internal validity answering the question of how

research findings match reality. How congruent are the findings with what is really out

there in the natural setting? Are investigators observing and measuring what they think

they are observing and measuring? Toma (2005) uses Fetterman's (1989) definition of

"credibility" in a qualitative case study as the "degree to which it rings true to natives

and colleagues in the field." This fits the basic notion that the description of the case is

accurate based on the understanding of those studied. Toma (2005) states, "The study

is deemed "credible" "when what the researcher presents and describes the reality of the

participants who informed the research in ways that resonate with them" (p. 413). One

way to enhance the credibility and thus, internal validity is to use the strategy of

member checks. Merriam (1998) defines member checks as "taking data and tentative

interpretations back to the people from whom they were derived and asking them if the

results are plausible. A number of writers suggest doing this continuously throughout the study" (p. 204).

Each interviewee was provided with the opportunity to review the results of the interviews and have a chance to participate in correcting or restating anything that I might have misunderstood or stated in an incorrect way.   As stated above, these member checks were critical to the findings. This insures that the data is valid and that I captured their true meanings of the case study – the merger. It should be noted that in each case, I not only summarized the findings from each subject's interviews in a separate document, I also provided the exact transcribed interview dialogues so that I could have one hundred percent agreement on what was stated and shared with the interviewee. If anything was misunderstood, I wanted to know exactly where in the transcripts I might have misunderstood the subjects. All ten of the subjects agreed that the dialogues were an accurate presentation of what we discussed in our interviews.

The data proved to be trustworthy when several mid-level managers tended to tell the same story or tended to tell the same events and explained how they maneuvered within the organization relating to these same events. Common themes emerged, and the stories tended to overlap, letting me know the data reached a saturation point. The themes and understandings were clearly evidenced. All of these measures added to the validity of this study.

Another way to enhance the validity of the study is to engage in peer examinations. Merriam (1998) states, "asking colleagues to comment on the findings as they emerge enhances validity" (p. 204). I used peer examinations with colleagues who I know are tracking the merger.

Lastly, I should mention the strategy of triangulation to enhance validity. Merriam (1998) defines triangulation as "using multiple investigators, multiple sources of data, or multiple methods to confirm the emerging findings" (p. 204). I used the college's website as a second source of data to triangulate the interviews. The college's website houses new organizational charts, documents, and employee blogs with running commentaries from our college president. I also used printed documents from our SACS substantive change document for the college merger, timelines used by the college's executive team and the SACS on-site visit documents, and an article from *Georgia Trend Magazine* that interviewed our president several months after the merger took place. These items can be found in appendices D-F. This added a thick and rich database of documents and communications that helped triangulate the data.

Transferability

"Transferability" means that the stories from mid-level managers about their experiences with the merger should be useful in illuminating other similar cases of mergers within the Technical College System of Georgia. Transferability is synonymous with external validity and is concerned with the extent to which the findings of one study can be applied to other situations (Merriam, 1998). If this current case study can be applied to or sounds similar to the experiences of other mid-level managers at other merging technical colleges then the current study will be deemed transferable. It will be applicable to another setting or group. Toma (2005) cites Lincoln and Guba (1985), who suggest that "the only way in which to establish transferability is to create a 'thick description of the sending context so that someone in a potential receiving context may assess the similarity between them and...the study'" (p. 126). Toma (2005) also states,

"It is through thick description that a case study of applied qualitative work can inform theory and practice" (p. 415).

This notion of "transferability" explains what quantitative researchers describe as "generalizability" in their quantitative studies. Although transferability is important, it should be noted that most qualitative researchers feel that credibility and the concept of internal validity is more critical to demonstrate in their research than the notion of "transferability." To enhance transferability, one strategy would be to use many cases to study the same phenomenon. Although this is beyond the scope of the current study, if other colleges within TCSG choose to study their mergers, than this study could possibly contribute to a cumulative study within TCSG.

Dependability

The notion of "dependability" involves accommodating changes in the environment studied and in the research design itself. This occurs as the understanding of the researcher becomes more refined over the course of data collection (Toma, 2005. 416). In my study of mid-level managers, I refined my questions when their answers seemed to need more in-depth probing. For a hypothetical example, if several participants answered a question about merger events out of chronological order, I might want to ask them to rephrase their story of what happened initially and then what happened next. It would be important to capture the events as the merger progressed through its stages. Refining and developing more in-depth questions that help to probe participants to give more credible answers is an acceptable tool that enhances dependability. In the actual current study I did add two questions about "healing" that I felt were a very important part of each interviewee's story. More in-depth explanation of this will be addressed in chapter four.

Dependability in qualitative studies is often compared to "reliability" in quantitative studies. It often refers to the extent to which research findings can be replicated (Merriam, 1998). Reliability answers this question: If this study were repeated, would I find the same results? Reliability in the traditional sense seems to be something of a misfit when applied to qualitative research because human behavior is never static, and researchers are seeking to describe and explain the world as those in the world actually experience it (Merriam, 1998). Thus, the findings at two different times may not be the same or consistent in qualitative research. Lincoln and Guba (1995) suggest thinking about the "dependability" or "consistency" of the results obtained from the data (page 288). Merriam (1998) states it in this manner:

> Rather than demanding that outsiders get the same results, a researcher
> wishes outsiders to concur that, given the data collected, the results make
> sense – they are consistent and dependable. The question then is not
> whether findings will be found again but whether the results are consistent
> with the data collected. (p. 206)

As qualitative studies evolve, the process of each study should be consistent and reasonably stable over time and across researchers and methods (Miles and Huberman, 1994, p. 278). Toma (2005) gives many of Miles and Huberman's (1994) recommendations for dependability:

- A study design congruent with clear research questions;

- An explicit explanation of the status and roles of the researcher within the site;

- Findings showing meaningful parallelism across data sources;

- Specifying basic theoretical constructs and analytical frameworks;

- Collecting data cross a full range of settings, respondents, periods, and the like;

- Parallel approaches among researchers on a given team collecting and analyzing data;

- And the presence of peer or colleague review. (p. 416)

In terms of this case study, the sample of subjects, the same questions asked, the same set of interview questions, the same college context for interviewing the subjects, and the triangulation of data with the website comments and documents should all enhance the dependability of this study.

Confirmability

The fourth term that helps to describe rigor in qualitative research is "confirmability." This is the concept that data can be confirmed by someone other than the researcher. It is similar to the "objectivity" within quantitative methodology. According to Toma (2005), "objectivity here does require that another researcher can confirm findings, but it is not the researcher who is objective; rather, it is the findings themselves" (p. 417). In other words, the findings should be an accurate reflection of the mid-level managers who participate in this merger study and not some "fabrication" based on my own biases and prejudices. For this study to be "confirmable," it was important for me to make sure that each question was framed from a neutral standpoint that has nothing to do with my attitudes and biases about the current merger taking place at our college. In addition, it was important to perform "member checks" where each individual had the opportunity to review the interview transcripts for accuracy to make sure that I truly captured their stories of their experiences during the merger. Toma (2005) concludes, "All findings in qualitative case study designs depended on the participants more than on the inquirer" (p. 417). The concept of an "audit trail" is very important for confirmability. An audit trail is a clear demonstration that I framed the

study and collected the data and analyzed the data in the way that I stated I would do so at the outset of the study. It includes stating ahead of time what my values and biases are that might influence the study (see section below on subjectivity and the role of the researcher), and to consider rival explanations and conclusions that might impact the study as well. Toma (2005) also concludes, "Results will be greatly diminished if there is bias in interpretation" (p. 417).

Taken together these standards of rigor as defined by credibility, transferability, dependability, and confirmability added to this study's authenticity and trustworthiness. It is also important to recognize that the only way to capture these individual journeys of mid-level managers was to do a qualitative study using a basic research paradigm and a constant-comparative method of analysis. The case study analysis was the most appropriate design to answer the specific research questions relating to this merger. For follow-up on this authenticity and rigor of this qualitative design, please refer to Appendix G.

Subjectivity and the Role of the Researcher

I originally wanted to study the merger occurring at the college where I work and changed my mind by thinking that I would only receive "high self-monitoring" responses or "high social desirability" responses from the staff at my college who know me personally.   However, upon further reflection, I realized that the mid-level managers would be from all three colleges and there would be many who did not know me personally or who had not worked with me in the past. In addition, all of the interviews which took place after the July 1, 2009 merger included mid-level managers who were "survivors" of the merger. Therefore it was determined important by me to get their individual stories of the merger. Those who knew me also knew that I have

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invested four years in graduate school. They knew how important my research quest was and it made sense that they would answer in an honest and forthcoming fashion.

In the current study, I initially made sure that all participants understood that the nature of their participation in the interviews had nothing to do with their job status and that all information was completely confidential and that they would not be named as a participant. I was sure to make this specifically clear at the beginning and end of each interview. Although participation in this study was voluntary, I realized that some people might have felt obligated to participate. I attempted to alleviate this concern by telling interviewees that they did not have to participate at all and that they could stop the interview process at any time if they began to feel uncomfortable. As it turned out, none of my interviewees felt uncomfortable, and one of the participants actually called me back a few weeks later to retell his story as it had changed since the first time I had interviewed him. He wanted to make sure I captured his new interpretations of the merger.

To take out any bias I carefully constructed my interview questions in the format of neutral, chronological events. For example, I asked participants to tell me their story of the merger. I asked them what happened next, and then asked them what happened after that. In other words, I specifically relied on the chronology of events of the merger as a way to probe my interviewees. This left out any bias or interpretation from my own experiences in their stories.

I conducted myself in the spirit of a doctoral candidate in a graduate research program as I collected the data. Each participant was put at ease with casual conversation and the development of rapport at the beginning of each session. All concerns were discussed openly and honestly. During each of the interviews, I tried not

to lead the participants into any answer, and I maintained myself as a neutral party in this interview process (as described above). All questions were asked in a neutral way so as not to impose any "social desirability" in the answering of the questions. In addition, any time an interviewee appeared confused or hesitated to respond to a question, I simply asked that question in a more basic or simpler fashion for clarity. I tried to control for "bias" and "reactivity" as mentioned by Maxwell (2005).

Finally, it should be noted that although I perceived myself as a neutral interviewer, there were a few times where I probed and interacted with the interviewee to get a better understanding of the data. In other words, my understanding of what their journey was about included my interpretation of their story. At one point in the very first interview, I had an "ah ha" moment about how the mid-level manager emotionally felt after the merger. Hearing the information, made me question some of my own preconceived notions about the "healing process" that individuals go through and what the college culture was dealing with. I interacted in a neutral way to ask some further questions and upon reflection, I ended up adding the subsequent questions (numbers 9 and 10) on my interview protocol about "healing." This "ah ha" moment is described in chapter four as a personal dialogue that I had with subject number one and shows my place in the interpretation of the data.

CHAPTER FOUR

RESULTS

Prior to telling the story of the mid-level managers, it is necessary to think in terms of the chronology of the merger itself. The merger chronology gives in-depth background and understanding of the cycle of emotions, turmoil, and healing process that was part of all the mid-level managers' stories.

Merger Chronology

As mentioned in the earlier chapters of this study, an initial merger between two technical colleges, Chattahoochee Technical College and North Metro Technical College, was announced during August, 2008. I was (and currently still am) employed at Chattahoochee Technical College and was part of all of the chronological events described here. It should be recalled that Chattahoochee Technical College was a very large technical college to begin with. North Metro Technical College was a mid-sized college that was originally going to merge with Chattahoochee Technical College to broaden our community service area and offer a more comprehensive set of programs from our joint program offerings. Chattahoochee Technical College already had an interim president in place because the previous president – Dr. Harlon Crimm had recently retired after 24 years of service to the college. After the two college merger was announced, an interim president was also put in place at North Metro Technical College so that a search could begin for a new merged college president. A college presidency search was done through TCSG – The Technical College System of Georgia. In October

of 2008, it was announced that Dr. Sanford Chandler from Appalachian Technical College would assume the new role of President of the newly merged college. Shortly after he began his tenure in the newly merged college, Dr. Chandler announced that a third college, Appalachian Technical College, would also be involved in the merger. Dr. Chandler had been the previous president of that college. This type of merger among three technical colleges was the first of its kind in the Technical College System of Georgia (TCSG). It was also the first time that a merger of three colleges was seeking accreditation from SACS - the Southern Association of Colleges and Schools. Below is Table 4 with some key dates and times of this merger process. Appendix D is the timetable of events leading up to the merger. This timetable was placed in the substantive change document that was submitted to SACS. Appendix E is another timeline that was given to the SACS visiting committee that was on campus doing a site visit on March 31, 2009. Both timetables and Table 4 below are helpful in showing how the events leading up to the merger of July 1, 2009 transpired. Appendix F is a firsthand account of the impact of the merger on the college found in *Georgia Trend Magazine*, April 2010 edition.

Table 4.   Major Events of the Three College Merger

1)	President of Chattahoochee Tech announces his retirement: graduation	June 2007
2)	Interim President in place at Chattahoochee Tech	Fall 2007
3)	Task Force begins to study the feasibility of a merger	February, 2008
4)	Announcement of Interim President at North Metro Tech	July, 2008
5)	Ron Jackson, Commissioner of TCSG talks to all three colleges	July, 2008

Table 4 (continued).   Major Events of the Three College Merger

6)	Committees between the colleges start meeting to discuss merger policies and procedures	July, 2008
7)	Announcement of the Merger of Chattahoochee Tech And North Metro Tech by the State Board of Technical and Adult Education (SBTAE)	August, 2008
8)	Announcement of new president at Chattahoochee Tech	October, 2008
9)	Announcement of Appalachian Technical College in the mix, The SBTAE decided on October 15, 2008 to include College C	October, 2008
10)	New president of Chattahoochee begins his new role	November, 2008
11)	The Commission voted to accept the prospectus for the Merger of the three colleges	December, 2008
12)	The senior leadership for the new college was selected	January, 2009
13)	The merged college was awarded the name of Chattahoochee Technical College	February, 2009
14)	SACS comes to do an onsite visit of newly merged college	March 31, 2009
15)	The merging of programs, services, and documents is expected To be completed by June 30, 2009	June 30, 2009

All of these events had taken place prior to my actual interviewing any of my ten mid-level managers who were described in chapter three in the participants section. The stories of these managers unfolded as I asked them each to tell me about their journey before, during, and after the merger.

Results from Interviews- When Categories and Sub-themes Emerge

Many categories with sub-themes were induced from my data set as I read over each of the transcripts and notes from my interviews. This analysis was done during

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and after the full set of interviews was completed. Each interview session was tape recorded and transcribed. Member checks were completed by all ten participants. Each interviewee acknowledged in an email back to me that he or she agreed with the summary documents and actual transcripts of the interviews. There are nine major categories of themes with several of these having subthemes that emerged from the interview coding sessions. The themes are listed below by number, with a title and a brief explanation (See Table 5 below). All of these categories and sub-themes include the answers to the two basic research questions about how mid-level managers navigated the merger and how they assisted their employees during the merger.

There is an overarching "nautical theme" to all of these categories. I used the nautical themes only for the names of the categories and sub-themes because several of the mid-level managers used quotes such as, " You either jump on the ship and\or you paddle with us, or you sink or swim," and "there was a lot of turbulence and chaos during the merger." These types of quotes described this case study like a ship upon tumultuous seas. I thought many of the stories resembled a ship trying to navigate the waters of turbulent times, and I thought of all the employees as crew members on this moving ship. In the case of a few described "aggressive personalities," I actually thought of the employees like "sharks" in the waters. It should be noted these nautical themes are strictly descriptive and all information under each category and sub-theme was directly taken from the research data.

Table 5.   Categories and Subthemes Emerging During Coding

1-Size and Time – A Huge Ship to Navigate: This category relates to size issues of merging three technical colleges within the technical college system. The college became a big bureaucracy with many size issues for handling hundreds of employees and 11,500 students. This category includes the sub-theme of: ***Time – It Takes Time to Turn an Ocean-liner:*** This sub-theme relates to the lengthy time period it took for this particular merger to take place and how long it took for people to get appointed in the newly merged college. Another sub-theme is: ***Personalities – A Full Crew Onboard***: This sub-theme relates to dealing with many more new personalities in the bureaucracy. It relates to more people in each department and new leaders in administration.

2-Day-to-Day Operations – Keeping the Ship Afloat: This category discusses how people functioned in their day-to-day jobs. It includes the sub-theme of: **Stuck *in the Status Quo – Is the Ship Moving Yet?*** This sub-theme depicts how some departments were not able to move forward yet and make decisions directly after the merger took place. They seemed to be stuck in the status quo.

3-*Leadership – Who is the Captain and the Crew?* This category discusses the leadership styles of the surviving mid-level managers. It includes the sub-themes of: ***Change Agent – I Can Help Change Happen Effectively.*** This sub-theme describes how mid-level managers saw themselves during the process of the merger. It also includes the sub-theme of:

Table 5 (continued).   Categories and Subthemes Emerging During Coding

Self- Efficacy – The Crew Perceives Themselves as Talented: This sub-theme defines the mid-level managers feeling competent in their skills and abilities.

4- Coping with Change – Hang on to a Life Vest, a Buoy or a Rope: This category describes organizational change and how people coped and reacted to change. It includes the sub-themes of: ***Self-anxiousness- Will I stay Onboard or Jump Ship?*** This sub-theme describes one of the main types of coping mechanisms some of the mid-level managers dealt with before and after the merger. Coping also has the sub-theme of: ***It Is What It Is*** – This sub-theme tied directly in with types of coping mechanisms that mid-level managers used during the merger. Specifically it deals with realistic views, practical logic, and reasoning.

5 – Employee Anxiousness and Coping – Keeping the Crew Afloat: This category deals with how mid-level managers helped employees navigate the merger and deal with their anxieties during the merger. This category covers the second major research question of my study.

6 – Things Outside of Your Control – Oh No, an Ice Berg! This category describes issues outside of the control of some mid-level managers. It includes the sub-theme of: ***Chaos –Which Way Do I Navigate in a Vortex?*** This sub-theme describes systems not in place after the merger and how some day-to-day operations were in chaos and falling apart because of this issue.

Table 5 (continued).   Categories and Subthemes Emerging During Coding

7 – Stability – The Hull of the Ship is Strong and Solid vs. Instability – This is a Whole New Ship! This category describes how some things are still the same, such as the mission and purpose of departments within the college. It also discusses how some mid-level managers see the college as a whole new college with nothing the same.

8- Positive Future and Healing–Moving towards Calmer Waters: This category describes how ultimately the problems of the merger will work themselves out and the college will become more settled with the change. It is a direct result of asking a specific research question of whether the candidates thought the college was in a healing process.

9- Unexpected Findings-Mysteries of the Ocean: This category refers to sub-themes that emerged in the data that were not covered within other categories and sub-themes. In this current category we find some unexpected findings such as: *Aggressive Personalities – Sharks in the Waters.* Upon interviewing some colleagues I found out that there were a few strong personalities in the early stages of the merger that had an impact on perceptions of the new college culture. This category also included *Unhappy Personalities – Crustacean Crabs are Among Us!* This sub-theme covers how some people were impacted by other negative personalities in the merger mix.

Data Related to Size and Time – A Huge Ship to Navigate!

This category relates overall to how big the newly merged college became, how long it took to get the entire organizational chart established, and the time it took to get all the positions filled. The sub-theme of: *Time – It Takes Time to Turn an Ocean-liner,* related specifically to the long process for this particular merger to place the employees in the newly merged college. The following excerpt depicts this sub-theme well. After asking, "Looking back, would you have done things differently?" the subject replied:

> Personally, I would not have probably done anything any differently. The
> only thing that I would have, if I were in the upper administration, I think
> I would have, made some appointments and decisions regarding who was
> going to get positions faster. [I then asked "and that's critical, why?"]
> ….Well, because, I think it, a whole lot of people went through, a whole
> lot of anxious time that they didn't need to and time was wasted that could
> have been put towards actually accomplishing merger events that were
> eaten up in the selection of administrative positions. You know we didn't,
> we didn't move nearly as fast as we could have while making some of the
> decisions because nobody wanted to stick their neck out and say "this is
> what we're going to do." Because there was no one that was clearly in
> charge that could do that.

This particular excerpt shows that this mid-level manager felt that the upper-level administrators of the college, those above the mid-level positions, did not make position decisions fast enough. The day-to-day work productivity appeared to slow down because administrative leaders took such a long time to place people into positions. This finding is unique to the current merger (in the Technical College System of

Georgia) because the other ten colleges that went through a merger within the system were able to place all the employees rather quickly (at least this is what I was told by peers at other merging colleges within the Technical College System of Georgia). This particular merger was the first of its kind to bring three colleges together. Because there were now three people occupying most positions (i.e., such as three registrars, and three admissions directors), each position in the newly merged college became a competitive process. The administration took weeks and weeks to interview everyone for their positions. There were dozens of committees set up to interview candidates for each position in the college. In addition, the committees were not all scheduled at the same time. Some employees applied for several positions because they did not know which one they would ultimately get. This open competitive process of selection for each position brought unsure and anxious employees applying for many more jobs than they actually needed to apply. The placement of employees literally took several months to resolve. This was the key idea behind the frustration and anxiety of mid-level managers who did not know if they had a job or if their employees had a job. In discussing this with one mid-level manager, I asked if she perceived the long time of posting and applying for jobs an "issue" and she replied:

> It was a huge issue. So they started posting jobs for the middle level in
> March. Now, the schools were going to merge July 1st. June 30th was
> going to be our last day. So from our standpoint, we're talking many
> director positions. Time was running out. Then, the biggest part of it was
> you had colleague against colleague applying for the same job –
> [Interviewer interjected: Right. One spot for three people] – because they
> were so thin as far as that mid-level management, that conceivably five or

six people could apply for one job. The people that you would have as

friends and colleagues that you would have been working together as peers

among the schools now suddenly became somewhat resentful, suspicious

of what they were now doing, so they would get the job over someone else.

So communication among our peers ceased because no one wanted to

know what the other person was doing to up their chances to get the

position.

The result of this long, drawn out process of hiring folks led this mid-level manager to

feel there was chaos in the system. According to her, "There was not a lot of

communication relegated as to who was going to be appointed to their job, versus who

was going to have to apply, versus how many jobs were there going to be to begin with."

Not knowing who was going to be placed where in the system led employees to

feel like they were amidst chaos in the work place. When I spoke to two upper-level

administrators about the timeliness of the merger and placement of employees into

their positions, they were "well aware" of how long it took. The college really did not

have any other choice in placing employees into positions other than an open

competitive process. This was the first merger in TCSG with three colleges and there

were more than two active incumbents for most positions. Not wanting to have any

politics involved or bad feelings about appointing people to positions, the college took

on an "equitable" and "fair" competitive application process for employees. All positions

were announced as "internal" to the three colleges, but all employees who were qualified

could apply.

Thus, it took many months of interviewing committees and selection interviews

to fill the complete organizational chart. The result was that those long months of filling

positions were "agonizing" for employees on the one hand, but necessary for the college on the other hand.

Day-to-Day Operations – Keeping the Ship Afloat

During the merger, employees had to continue to function in their day-to-day jobs. This category included the sub-theme of: *Stuck in the Status Quo – Is the Ship Moving Yet?* Some employees felt that some departments were not able to move forward and make decisions directly after the merger took place. They felt as though they were stuck within the status quo. This sub-theme correlates directly to the category describing how long it took to finally get employees assigned to their new roles in the merged college. Because some employees were unsure of who was in charge during the interviewing process, many decisions, especially fiscally related decisions, had to be put on hold. One mid-level manager summed it up nicely as:

> The next phase [of the mergers] was when my position was announced as
> being open and available. I think that was a particularly, anxious time for
> my existing staff and me. Again, just the not knowing. The not knowing
> how the other people were doing in their interview process. Not knowing
> who was going to be on the search committee; that kind of thing. I guess,
> from the time it was announced until the time they actually did the second
> interviews it was almost a month. It was kind of a difficult time
> [Interviewer then asked for elaboration]. Well just the not knowing who
> was going to be in charge. We kind of got held up in making some of the
> decision making process....

This manager explained to me that she could not get certain decisions made because she was not sure who was in charge above her; was it the person who still held

the job, or the person who was newly appointed to have the job after the merger took place in a few months? In some instances there were still a few months left for the incumbent to finish the job, while there was a new employee waiting in the wings to take over that position as of July, 1, 2009. Employees did not know who would make decisions during the interim period of months. It was a hazy time period for some mid-level management positions.

Leadership – Who is the Captain and the Crew?

This category described the leadership styles of the surviving mid-level managers. Leadership styles among the managers were different, and they each had feelings about their leadership competencies. This category included the sub-theme of: *Change Agent – I Can Help Change Happen Effectively.* This sub-theme dealt with how mid-level managers saw themselves during the process of the merger. This category also included the sub-theme of: *Self- Efficacy – The Crew Perceives Themselves as Talented*: This sub-theme described mid-level managers feeling competent in their own particular skills and abilities. This sub-theme came out in many of the interviews. It was not a notion of arrogance as much as it was a feeling that these mid-level managers would survive the merger. They felt they would end up with a job in the newly merged college as a mid-level manager again. In other words, they felt secure in their competencies from before the merger and saw a place for themselves in the new college:

I don't know if this is egotistical, or if it's realistic. I don't know what it is.
I never had the thought that I would be going away. I don't know why, I
just never thought I wasn't going to be there. I always saw my place, I had
an idea of what I wanted to do, and that's what I focused on. I focused on

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moving forward to what it was that I had decided I wanted to do, and that

was to work with the _____ [name of unit/department/program].

The same manager stated he felt security in his knowledge, skills, and abilities. Did he

see himself as a change agent in this merger process? He replied:

I don't like the word change agent. I come from a management

background and I think that that word really diminishes – I think just that

little – I think that's way too simple. If something needs changing I think I

can see that the change needs to be made, and I think that I can think of,

maybe, a good way to change that. I will tell you that I'm successful about

half the time. The word change agent, you read it a lot in books and stuff,

and it's kind of a catch phrase. I think that can mean so many different

things. So, in some ways yes, and in some ways no.

When I asked another mid-level manager if she was a change agent she replied:

A change agent? That's an interesting question. A 'get her done agent.' I

think that's been my downfall in some respects, is because some people

expect me to get things done and really I shouldn't be doing things that

other people should be doing, but they won't go ask the other people to go

do it because they're afraid they won't get it done. [I interjected that she

was trustworthy and always came through] and she said 'I try to. I am not

always successful at it, but I try to, and I try not to do anything on the sly.

Keep everything aboveboard.

These two leaders expressed attributes of what I described as a "change agent," but they

only thought of themselves as people who jump in and get the job done. They did not

necessarily see themselves as responsible for change as much as they saw themselves as

problem-solvers. Another mid-level manager definitely considered herself as a change

agent:

> I do. I put myself out on a chopping block for my staff. I did early on. I
>
> would rather take the beating and take the screaming and take the
>
> hollering than have my staff do that, and now I find that more, because
>
> there's so much that you don't know. 'Can we do this? Can we do that?'
>
> And the person that answers that question is not on your campus. So you
>
> send an email, try to get them on the phone and you're delayed waiting,
>
> where before they could go down the hall and get it fixed. You can't do
>
> that anymore. So, I've thrown myself out there and said, 'Okay, I'll do it.
>
> I'll take the blame and if it comes down to it, I'll fix it,' I'm having to do
>
> more of that because they don't know either. They want to change their
>
> minds. They want to change the process. We have to decide and we'll play
>
> catch-up later.

This manager felt that her role was to make things work during the transition period

and it was better to take the risk as a "change agent" and take the heat for any mistakes

later. Her motivation was always to help service the customers, the students. When I

asked one mid-level manager if he was a change agent, he said "No." I specifically asked

him if he saw himself helping his employees change. He said he "felt their pain" and

what they were going through, but the best he hoped for was the "Velcro Effect."   I

asked what the Velcro effect was, and he mentioned that, "I give advice, and sometimes

it sticks, and sometimes it doesn't." He also mentioned that he told his employees to do

their job and if they had any questions to come and ask him. If he could tell them the

answers he always would. He did not perceive himself as a change agent, but he felt competent in his competencies, skills, and abilities.

Coping with Change – Hang on to a Life Vest, a Buoy or a Rope

This category relates to the theme of organizational change and how people coped and reacted to change. It includes the sub-theme of: *Self-anxiousness- Will I stay Onboard or Jump Ship?* Mid-level managers used different strategies to help themselves cope with the turmoil before, during, and after the actual merger. One mid-level manager said the experience was "gut-wrenching" when her choice for president of the merged college was not selected. Speaking about job security, she stated she felt "anxious, frustrated, and kind of angry." She was afraid she might lose her job after all these years. She talked about the upcoming fall quarter of classes and how her department still had not yet seen any changes. There was no merged plan in place and no positions announced for the merged college in her department at that time. It was very frustrating. Finally, after finding out her position was going to be secure, she still realized there was not enough time to develop procedures for her newly merged division. Policies had been set, but procedures were not in place. Another mid-level manager who used a coping strategy of practical logic replied:

> My whole attitude about the whole job application/interview thing was if I
>
> get a job, fine. If I don't, somebody's going to need a [subject matter]
>
> teacher somewhere. So did I let it keep me awake at night? No. I learned
>
> a long time ago, God was going to provide for me no matter what.

When asked if she was keeping a positive attitude during the merger, here is how she answered:

Yeah. But also a determination that if something were to come down the

pipes that was just totally against my morals, my philosophy, whatever you

want to call it, I could always jump ship and go.

She indicated that she had other jobs that she could fall back on if she left the college.

She had her retirement planned out and her future was secure wherever she landed.

Another mid-level manager told me that he "tried to be pragmatic about the merger"

and that he felt like he had to "protect myself all through this process, and protect the

department." He stated he tried to be understanding of the merger decisions, and that

he recognized that there were some things in the old way of doing things that could have

been changed, and he was fine with that. Another mid-level manager said that early on

the process was "nerve wracking." It was hard to feel like the college was making a

forward motion. Although she perceived herself as a "proactive leader and not a status

quo leader," she felt like she was less decisive as she normally would have been. Until

they actually placed the individuals into their positions of leadership, mid-level

managers had to deal with a lack of definitive answers for some of the day-to-day

operations and decision making.

A common coping response from some mid-level managers was plain old

fashioned logic and practicality which I entitled: *It Is What It Is.* Specifically it deals

with realistic and practical choices that mid-level employees deal with. The above

mentioned quote is a direct example of this sub-theme. Here it is heard again from

another mid-level manager who replied:

So I was the person at the college that when the rumor – there was a big

rumor, and people would say, 'Is it going to happen? I'm like, 'it's going to

happen'. _____ [person's name] was one of those people. She goes, 'it's

not going to happen.' I said, '_____ [person's name], it's going to happen.'

I was like – well, I am a realist. I'm always realistic with myself, so that

was not – that's not unusual. So, I guess that I had some time to make a

personal strategy for myself, and that made me feel very comfortable,

because I don't like surprises. I don't think people in general like surprises

unless it's like a surprise birthday party, and then you might like it. Or if

you win the lottery and that's a surprise, then you might like that. In

general, I just – don't think people like surprises. So I made sure that I

was not going to be surprised, and I wasn't surprised.

These mid-level managers took a practical approach to the changes going on around

them and in turn these practical strategies seemed to help them keep afloat of all the

chaos around them.

Employee Anxiousness and Coping – Keeping the Crew Afloat

This category directly answers my second research question of how mid-level

managers guided and managed their own employees as they went through this

organizational change. I specifically asked each of my subjects what they did for their

employees or how they helped their employees cope during the merger. In summary,

many described that they were good listeners while their employees voiced concerns

about job security and the future of the college. Several stated that they were very

practical with their employees and I heard the phrase "It is what it is" several times

during the interview process. All of the mid-level managers were supervisors before the

merger, and they adapted their leadership style to the current situation. In addition,

they stayed focused and offered as much positive support as possible. One thing that the

administration had repeatedly told the employees was that they would have a job and

that this was not a reduction in force, known as a RIF. The upper administration, the

president, provost, and the president's leadership team, stated at the employee meetings

held early on during January and February of 2009 that everyone would get placed but

they may have a different job or title in the newly merged college. Mid-level managers

took this to heart and often tried to calm their employees with statements assuring them

of job security. As it turned out, only a handful of employees did not get placed in the

new organizational structure. This occurred because they did not want to accept any

other position than the specific job they had or a new position they wanted. It was

clearly impossible to be able to place everyone in the job they held before because we

were merging three colleges with three people for many of the positions. Before the

merger, for example, we had three registrars from each of the colleges, but we could only

have one registrar in the merged college. This was true of many director positions such

as: Admissions Director, Special Populations Coordinator, Director of Financial Aid,

Director of Maintenance, Director of Security, etc. Here is how the mid-level managers

responded to the stress of their employees:

> Well, I stayed very positive with them, as well, because I took the
>
> administration at their word. And a year ago, we were told by the
>
> commissioner, we were told by other people that faculty did not have to
>
> worry about their jobs, and that really, unless you were a top
>
> administrator, you really didn't have to worry about whether you would
>
> have a job. So only a very small group of people didn't know whether they
>
> would actually end up with jobs. So, I took the administration at their
>
> word. I was very positive. When people came to me literally crying, or
>
> nervous wrecks, or whatever, and they came to me often – I talked to

people often – I stayed positive and I said, "It will work out. I don't know

how it's going to work out, but it's going to work out. You're going to have

a job. Please don't worry about it." I would say to them, "I know it's easy

for me to say." Especially after I got a job, it was even much easier to say.

But, I just tried to stay positive with them and say, "You are going to have

a job. Don't worry about it. Everything is going to work out okay. You

know the administration told us this. I'm going to believe that." So I just

tried to stay outwardly positive.

This same mid-level manager told her employees to read the book by Pritchett (2007)

entitled *the Employee guide to Mergers and Acquisitions.*

They passed around this book, which I thought was very helpful, about

companies' merging. To me, I read this little booklet and I thought it was

right on target. So I made sure, in my office, that if they hadn't been given

a copy of the book, I went around and told people, "If you haven't been

given a copy of this book, borrow mine. And if you have been given a copy,

read it because, to me, it is right on target. It's exactly what we are feeling

and what's happening.

This same mid-level manager stated that she did not openly go to people and meet with

them in groups. She talked to people who came to her. If employees came to her, she

stated that her role was, "kind of a counselor sort of role, sort of a cheerleader, a booster

or whatever." Another mid-level manager said similar kinds of statements to his

employees. His employees were concerned that they were going to lose their jobs. The

reason many felt that way was because they were told that the bigger college, College A

in the merger, was going to gobble up, College B, a smaller college in the merger. He

stated:

> It was, the question was, "What's going to happen? What's going to
>
> happen?" That was always the question. All you could say was, "I don't
>
> know exactly what's going to happen, but you're going to be okay.
>
> Whatever happens, you're going to be okay."

Another mid-level manager made a comment referring to the movie *The Wizard of Oz.*

He often told his employees that, "We are not in Kansas anymore," referring to the fact

that Dorothy was not safe at home anymore and things would be different. He wanted

his employees to work hard and be accountable for their work. I mentioned that it

sounded as though he gave them a reality check. His response was:

> Yes. And the Kansas comment came out quite often. We're not ever going
>
> to be like we were. You're not going to be able to – there will be some
>
> things that are similar and some aspects of your jobs will never change.
>
> You will have assigned areas to do whatever and it'll be business as usual
>
> but on the level above you and the way we're perceived and looked upon
>
> has a dramatic effect on what we're able to do.

His advice to his employees was, "work hard and be accountable so that the level above

of us will know that we are doing what we are supposed to be doing."

Another mid-level manager supervising faculty members told me that employees

were not really worried about their jobs, but more interested in their teaching schedules,

and "how their gravy train was going to work afterwards." Each set of faculty members

from the three separate colleges had different rules and policies relating to how many

classes they taught, what kind of classes they taught (how many online classes versus

traditional classes, and when they taught their classes. This mid-level manager's advice was to get faculty all on the same page. Employees were told:

> I said, 'Like it or not, whether it's right or not, whether it's the best thing or not is beside the point. It is what it is. We are where we are. You either jump on the ship and you paddle with us, or you sink or swim. And if you don't like it, I'm sure there are other colleges hiring. But this is what we're going to be. This is where we're going. Come along for the ride or find another boat to paddle on.' And that made some a little mad by my doing that.

This mid-level manager took the practical approach with employees and basically told them, "they could do this together or they could swim upstream." This manager thought it may have made several employees mad by having that attitude, but the manager felt that "we could not all go in the same direction if we didn't all start at the same place." This manager strived for consistency and teamwork with faculty.

In sum, regarding employees, the mid-level managers were reassuring that employees would have jobs and that they would be secure, but several were very practical in getting their employees to all get on board with the new policies and procedures in the newly merged college. Most of the mid-level managers were very careful to keep a positive attitude as well as a practical attitude. The main coping techniques the mid-level managers used during this transition time were to "listen" and "communicate" with their employees. They never made promises they couldn't keep but reassured their employees that they would have continued employment with the college.

The Category of Things Outside of Your Control – Oh NO, an Iceberg!

At an early point in the data collection process, one mid-level manager stated, "There has been nothing but chaos since the merger took place." Part of the chaos according to this employee was that systems were not fully in place for day-to-day functioning of this merged college.

> The last six weeks have been chaotic. Without getting into details which I am very happy to give you also, but any process that involves a department outside of my immediate department takes 5, 6 times the effort that it used to take. And it really doesn't matter whether it's somebody that's known to me or not known to me. Everyone is under so much stress that they simply aren't working optimally, not even close. I'll give you an example.

This mid-level manager discussed Human Resources procedures, purchasing procedures, and technology procedures in her interview as examples of the chaos. This indicated that not all departments had developed their merged policies and procedures at the time. Although the college was merged, the infrastructure to handle a "mega college" was not yet fully built. It also indicated that not everyone was healing at the same time or rate. Healing might be occurring in some parts of the system, but some people had to wait longer for merged policies and procedures to allow them to function more optimally and heal. Not everyone arrived at the same state of well-being after the merger as some had anticipated.

Six weeks after the merger, the same mid-level manager who complained that there was a lot of chaos in the system, responded with this statement when asked how this affected employees:

You asked me how it's affecting my employees. They can't necessarily do

some of the things that are routine....Yeah, they don't know how to move

forward with things that are daily activities. They are having to work with

people that they don't necessarily trust and whose behavior isn't always

trust inducing. And, I just think there's an awful lot of uncertainty even

for, you know, run of the mill employees.

Getting through this merger was hard on mid-level managers and their

employees. Navigating the merger was a journey that took many days and weeks to

work through. There was not a simple chain of events that merges a college, makes

everyone healed, and makes everyone feeling productive at the same time. Even the

successful mid-level managers were working hard on forward progress but had to

recognize it took a long time to become one fully merged college. Apparently, the

infrastructure was not complete at the time of the merger. Even four months after the

merger, one mid-level manager explained the chaos and infrastructure like this:

If you were in a banking industry or something where mergers are

happening all the time that would be one thing. But we were on the very,

very cutting edge. Not a lot of direction from downtown [TCSG] telling us

how to handle anything. The things they were handling unfortunately

were not handled correctly so that created more.

The same mid-level manager elaborated about how things had not settled down

at four months after the merger. I asked this mid-level manager, "Did things

settle down after the merger?"

In my opinion, no. We are – at this point in time, I think we are three

colleges who are somewhat trying to hang on to where we – what we had.

We comment. We comment in meetings. That's our history. That's what worked for us or didn't work for us, whether you're talking about calendars or whether you're talking about processes or procedures. It's very difficult not to say, "We used to do-"and I think sometimes that only increases the tension or the anxiety level or the animosity. And I think there is – I don't think it's a magic wand that you can wave and say, "July 1, the light bulb came on and we were all one." I think it's going to be a period of time and adjustment before – and quite frankly, some transition of people probably out of the college before we find ourselves being able to say, "We're one. We're done."

Stability – The Hull of the Ship is Strong and Solid vs. *Instability – This is a new ship!*

This category describes how some things are still the same such as the mission and purpose of departments within the college. This category also describes perceptions from some mid-level managers that this is a whole new college and it is very different. This theme became evident early on during data collection. It took on many characteristics of individual's responses, unit and department descriptions, and college-wide culture descriptions. Early on, one mid-level manager thought the initial merger between Chattahoochee Technical College and North Metro Technical College was very practical for what the college would offer the surrounding counties:

And I actually, was pretty pragmatic about it. I thought it was a pretty good idea. Because there were two schools, you know, one of which, we were, Chattahoochee, the big monster school and then you had North Metro, the smaller school that was actually being stifled because we were

so close. So it actually made sense to do that [implied it made sense to merge the two schools].

This manager was thinking in terms of the mission of the college and how the college services the local communities. The merger would only strengthen the college's ability to offer more quality programs from the combined colleges. Four of the mid-level managers that I interviewed consistently talked about the mission, the services we offer students, and the volume of work to do in combining three colleges. Every answer was focused on customer service and how the merger impacted the students. Although I was asking these individuals about how they handled the merger, their answers kept coming back to solving student services issues. When asked about how they helped their employees manage the merger, all of these individuals answered in terms of finding best practices for policies and procedures focused on student services. When I specifically asked one mid-level manager from student services about what kind of advice was offered to employees, here is what was said:

> I've been giving the advice; go to other colleges, college websites. Determine what sorts of activities, what best practices they're doing and now is the time to reinvent yourself, and think of it from the student perspective and from the perspective of we now have students who are going to Marietta or Jasper or Mountain Vies that might be coming to our campus. What are their needs? How can we better communicate with them? So we're looking at best practices, activities to offer students for retention areas, and how do we communicate all this chaos to students so they don't say –'Oh, I'm waiting until the dust settles.' So our whole mission is to make sure there wasn't a lot of dust in the air so the students

won't say, 'Well, I'll come back when you're all said and done with this,'

but that they could still help us in the merge.

These student services mid-level managers were focused on changes in the merger that would impact upon the students. They understand the long-term stability of the college and the mission of the college, which both are focused on the student body.

It is important to note that not all mid-level managers saw the stability of the college in their perspective. When I asked one mid-level manager to tell me how things were different and how they were the same, the manager replied:

They're not (the same). I tell people this all the time. I say Chattahoochee

Tech is a completely different entity. I call it the 'Old Chattahoochee Tech'

all the time. I say the Old Chattahoochee Tech or Appalachian Tech or

North Metro, because to me, it is a whole new world. I don't see a lot of

similarities. I really don't. It is a new institution, new policies, new

people, new ways of doing things, new attitudes, seven campuses, so many

students. It's just – we don't have the same roles. Very few of us have the

exact same role or job description that we had before, almost nobody.

Even the president was President of Appalachian Tech. Now he's the

President of Chattahoochee Technical College, which is so much bigger

and so different. So I don't see anybody as having the same job they had

before. To me, it really is, it's an entirely new world. You changed the

logo, you changed the college.

So I followed up with this question, "So is that helping you cope better with this new vision of how you perceive it?"

It doesn't help me cope, I don't guess. I guess it helps me cope in that I

don't think it's going to be the same as it was. I have no vision when I

come to work every day that it's going to be the same as it was before. As a

matter of fact, it's going to be different than it was yesterday and the day

before, and the day before, and the day before. I don't think we're going to

settle down for two years. I don't see us settling down for two years.

To this mid-level manager, the merger was about instability and there was no stability or

common ground at all. The college was a whole new entity that was continually

evolving.

Positive Future and Healing–Moving towards Calmer Waters

This category specifically relates to "healing" and "moving forward." In

describing this category, I include a brief narrative about part of the research process

that led me to want to inquire about the "healing process" of managers as they were

moving forward within the merged college. I creatively chose the category of "Moving

towards Calmer Waters" to help describe the healing nature of the future college when

the merger would not still be considered such a tumultous time.

Earlier in this chapter was a list of chronological events related to the history of

the merger. The chronology of events described here helps to explain the "emotional

reactions" of the employees to these events. When Chattahoochee Technical College's

President retired at the end of 2007, the college was told by the interim college

president and the Commissioner of the Technical College System that our college was

going to be merged with another technical college. Shortly after that, we were told that

not only would our college be merging with one other college, but with two other

colleges. In addition, 12 other colleges were going to be merged within our system. The

emotional upheaval in the work place drove me to want to better understand how the merger was affecting our workplace.   In the ten years that I had worked at the college, there had been a stable organizational structure and one President who had been there for over 24 years. Now the college and its employees were looking at a totally different work environment. Not only were employees unsure of who their new President would be, but they were unsure what the new college would look like in terms of structure, and whether or not they would all have jobs.

This was an emotional time for all college employees. The new President came on board and noticed the emotional upheaval. He gave all the employees a guidebook called "*The Employee Guide to Mergers and Acquisitions*" by Price Pritchett (2007). It was this guidebook that inspired my dissertation topic and added some insight to the emotions that employees were going through. Part of the guidebook indicated that there were psychological shockwaves of mergers and acquisitions. It mentioned uncertainty, ambiguity, mistrust, and self-preservation. Most importantly, in terms of emotional responses to a merger, the book mentioned a three-phase emotional pattern of 1) shock and numbness, 2) suffering, and 3) resolution. Part of the focus of my dissertation became the idea of finally moving forward and looking to a time of resolution, "healing," and seeing how managers navigated the merger successfully. Pritchett (2007) states, "Now people start coming to grips with the situation. You know you're moving into stage three when you begin to adjust to the changes" (p. 18). One of the most consistent and fascinating findings for me was a contradiction in what I initially thought about people and the college culture healing; what Pritchett (2007) had referred to as "resolution."   I was thinking that each of the units and departments along with the employees were going through a healing process during the time immediately following the merger. The

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merger occurred in July 2009, and presumably everyone was moving forward. Initially,

I thought this meant that once the merger took place and people knew where their

position in the college was, they would all be moving forward and healing. My findings

indicated that healing occurs at different rates and times for different people and

departments within the college. This is not a college-wide phase as much as it is a

personal change that directly correlates with which department people are located.

I was excited to find out how the mid-level managers, the mangers responsible

for the day-to-day functioning of the college would navigate and survive the merger.

One of the first interviews I had with a mid-level manager was about her story of the

merger. I asked her if she was "healing" and "moving forward" and if she thought the

college was moving forward. Her response shocked me because I had no idea at this

point that we were not all at the same stage and phase of emotional healing. Here is an

excerpt from our conversation:

Transcript Excerpt	
Jodie:	So you were answering this question, what will you take away with you and you started to talk about....
Subject 1:	Yeah, chaos....
Jodie:	....chaos that's going on and that's what you are going to remember?
Subject 1:	Oh yeah. The stress.
Jodie:	The stress? When?
Subject 1:	Daily.
Jodie:	But it's daily now, you are saying, after the merger?
Subject 1:	Yeah, after the merger.
Jodie:	Before the merger, during the merger, after the merger? Summarize the stress?

Subject 1:	Definitely there was stress during the time before I was selected as director. I think that stress actually pales compared to the stress now.
Jodie:	So stress now .....
Subject 1:	is very high....
Jodie:	Because? Fill in the blank.
Subject 1:	Well, in experiences like the one, I just described....
Jodie:	Ah huh....
Subject 1:	That's just one.
Jodie:	Systems are not in place? Everything is not....[Summarizing her earlier comments]
Subject 1:	Systems are not in place.
Jodie:	Everything is not operational? The systems haven't been made? I 'm just reiterating what you said to me [earlier in this interview].
Subject 1:	Right. Yes. Decisions have not been made. Part of its due to the lack of relationships, some priorities are not being communicated, or priorities that are being communicated but you still don't know where you are in the queue?
Jodie:	My question then is 'how is this affecting your employees? This post merger stress?'
Subject 1:	Well, some of their activities are inhibited, because things like purchasing processes have not been established so they don't know what to do.
Jodie:	What did you say? Inhibited? That's interesting
Subject 1:	Yeah, ah.... [Interrupted by the waitress again about the bill]
Subject 1:	You asked about how it's affecting my employees. They can't necessarily do some of the things that are routine.
Jodie:	Well I'm hearing something I never even expected, so I need to probe this. I guess my question is, well first of all, I interrupted so finish. It interrupts their routine?

This was a huge "Ah Ha" moment in my thinking of the merger in regards to the stages and the phases that employees perceived about their emotional well-being whether they thought the college was healing and moving forward. I never imagined that after the merger mid-level managers would still be thinking that the college had "healing" to do and that some employees would be on a different page in terms of moving forward. Here was a manager who wanted only good things to happen for her division, but felt very uneasy about the new culture and whether the college was "healed" from the upheaval of the merger. I knew that new mid-level managers were chosen and I naturally assumed they would be focused on "healing." The question of whether individuals as well as the college were healing (or not) were now going to be asked of all my subsequent interviewees. I felt compelled to ask each of my subsequent interviewees if they thought the newly merged college was "healed." I needed to know how each of them felt emotionally about this phase of resolution that Pritchett (2007) referred to in his book on mergers.

I interviewed ten employees and originally only one of them indicated that the college was "healed" from the merger and that things were smooth sailing. This mid-level manager was very happy and well adjusted to the changes from the merger. The other nine interviewees indicated they were all pleased to be selected for their jobs, but the emotional upheaval of the merger was still in play. One of the mid-level managers mentioned a time frame for healing and thought it would take the college two years at least before the college was "healed." I was very surprised to find one outlier among my subjects since the majority of managers seemed to believe that the college was far off from the "healing" process. However, it was approximately three weeks later that the one subject who thought the college was completely "healed" called me on the phone

and asked me for a second interview and an opportunity to "recant" the original story. I was shocked that this interviewee wanted to change the initial story. I re-interviewed this manager and found out that the department went through another restructuring since the merger and the manager was now facing more upheaval and organizational change. This manager would now be reporting to a different supervisor and the manager's staff would now be split among different departments. The new restructuring caused a reevaluation of the first interview describing this manager as doing really well and "moving on." I had previously asked this interviewee if the college was healed and the manager indicated yes. On my second visit, I asked if the answer had changed and the manager replied:

> Yes, the answer has changed. At the time, I guess, when I answered that question, we were already past a lot of the turbulence of the actual merger date, that July merger date. And so at that point, I was feeling pretty good. Now, as the time went on, there have been some lateral moves in the hierarchy of the college and that has affected me directly. Essentially what happened was.....

At that point in time, 100% of my subjects had indicated that the college was not "healed" (five months after the merger) and there would still be more change to come. Pritchett (2007) may have been correct in describing phases and stages of emotional well-being, but my study indicates that when the final stage of "resolution" and "healing" comes, it is different for every person and every organization going through change. These phases of organizational change and healing are different for everyone and every institution. When asked about healing, one mid-level manager clearly indicated that different departments were going through this process at different rates.

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She started off speaking about overall college healing and then discussed different departments:

> Have we healed as an institution? Absolutely not. We are still very much in the healing process. As a matter of fact, I'm not sure we've even gotten to the healing process, yet. We are still in this – it's very different than we're going to merge. It's like 'Okay. Now we are merged and there are a lot of hurt feelings and there's a lot of anger. There are a lot of people who left the college that we still miss.' So, no. We're not healed by any means, and like I said, I'm not even sure we've even put the Band-aid on the wound yet.

When asked about different departments, this mid-level manager replied:

> I think different people and different departments are going at it at different rates. Some people haven't even gotten over the fact that they don't still have their same job. Some people haven't moved on at all and some people have, I think, moved past that. As far as departments go, there are some I think that are greatly suffering more than other departments. I really do, as [name of department] goes, I think we work together pretty well. Yes, we step on each other's toes, and no, I don't think we all love each other as great sisters and brothers. But I do think we are learning to work together well and we are all trying to do just our jobs and to do just our jobs well and not to infringe on others. So I think [name of department] is, in my opinion, doing quite well and maybe better

than some other departments, and maybe not as well as some other

departments.

Another mid-level manager stated, "We are healing and I think we're probably further

down the road than a percentage – maybe 75, 80 percent, we're there." One mid-level

manager stated, "I think the college is healed, but you can still see the stitches." Another

mid-level manager responded that healing had not occurred and would take more time

because people were still getting over "negative experiences." Healing to this manager

was based on colleague's emotions and feelings:

> I think it's going to take some more time to quite honestly have some
>
> people who were very negative and very – when bad stuff happens to
>
> people that you care about, it's hard for people to let go of that.

When I asked another manager if she thought we were healed, she stated, "Totally? No.

Do I think we're in the process of healing? Yes. Do I think we are better than we were?

Yes." She also had this brief dialogue with me which shows that healing is an ongoing

process:

Jodie:	How long will it take to heal?
Subject 10:	My prediction from the very get-go was eighteen months. That was my prediction. They [faculty] would ask all these questions about – because I would say, 'This is where I see our department being. I want you to be responsible for some of those adjuncts. I want you to be involved for making the schedule for your campus. I want you to do this.' And they were like, 'Well, that's not our responsibility.' Yes, it is. If you have bought into this college –
Jodie:	Everything's your responsibility.
Subject 10:	- then it is your responsibility, and that's just the way it is. And you either do it or you don't.

Jodie: All right. Back to my questions.

Subject 10:   We will heal. Yes.

Jodie: So eighteen months?

Subject 10:   That's what I told them. They'd say, "Well, what about this? When is this going to happen? When is that going to happen?" I said, "It's going to be a transition, but by eighteen months, I think we should be where we need to be." Will it all be right? No. Will we change policies after? Yes. But it's a learning process, it's a growing process.

Subject 10:   It's a – we try something, we get feedback on it, we tweak it. But if we try something and all you're going to do is jump up and down and scream and holler and yell about it, then that's not helping.

Jodie: So you said just a few minutes ago that we are much better, it is much better, and it's getting better –

Subject 10:   It is.

Jodie: -   - because processes are getting better.

Subject 10:   Processes are getting better. I think just the fact that you learn people, that you don't think everybody's out to get you, that you do think people are trying to help you. And that's what I told them at the May meeting. I said, "You know, if you will just do your job the best you can do it, I will go to the wall for you," and I will. But until they believe that, until they trust that, it doesn't matter what I do. But I think there are more now today that trust me than did back on July 1st. I think on July 1st, the only people that trusted me were the College B faculty.

Jodie: So you've learned people and you've learned – that's what some people have said, that it took awhile to get to know who to go to, to ask for what, even though we all have a place and a job and a title. It's still not the same network we used to use, so it takes a while to figure out who does what, and then that's the formal network, and also the informal network.

Subject 10:   An even the formal network has changed and evolved. The people who were in place and named on July 1st are not the same people named today.

Jodie: True, The structure has changed and it will change again.

Subject 10:   It will continue to change. But people have to get over that and they have to be willing to roll with the punches and bend with the wind and quit just being so uptight about everything, taking everything to heart. Heck.

Jodie:	I agree one hundred percent. Okay. Well, you have survived.
Subject 10:	Well, I try to survive, but I'm still here.
Jodie:	well, you've coped really well.

Instead of looking at how individuals within the college were feeling, some managers were looking at processes and policies when they discussed the healing process. One manager stated that she didn't think there had been enough emphasis on the group as a whole. She felt that one college-wide luncheon where the three colleges got together to hear the president speak about the merger and many of the changes was not enough to blend three colleges. She felt we were moving forward but we had to keep on working towards handling the "volume and service" to our students since our size had almost doubled. When I asked if her department was moving forward, here is what she said:

> Yeah, my attitude and my perspective is this is what we've got; we've lived
>
> through what would be the hardest quarter now for the year, for our fiscal
>
> year. Now it's going to be downhill, however, how can we learn from what
>
> we just experienced? And if we keep doing what we were doing we're
>
> going to experience the same thing. So, don't expect any surprises. If we
>
> don't change it's not going to get any better. And that's where I am now in
>
> trying to head off things at the pass.

The focus here is that policies and procedures need work for the college to flow better in terms of handling the volume of students and the services we provide. She seemed to indicate we were moving forward but still had a ways to go yet. Another mid-level manager who was focused on policies and procedures mentioned that it would take a

year for things to settle down. This manager mentioned that the pressure was off once SACS came through and accredited our merged college:

> I think there's a time, too, that as a mid-level manager you have to prove yourself to a new group. Your past history doesn't matter and so while you're trying to move forward, you're also trying to keep them in the loop, you're trying to break old habits, you're trying to establish new processes, and you're trying to gain credibility, too, for a team that's got to move forward. Then you've got to figure out how to get them all in the same boat rowing in the same direction. So it's challenging. Some people embrace change well; others don't. I cannot tell you that there have not been days that I've looked to see when I can retire. I think we've all calculated that to the day. You know, it depends, Jodie. There are some days that I think, 'This is a challenge. This is something good. We can create something new.' And I would say the majority of my days are that way. There are some days, though, that I think, 'Oh, good God. I'm banging my head against the wall. This isn't working. No one's listening.'

This passage captures how many mid-level managers felt about all the change and the process of healing. It will take time to arrive at the place where we are all one college and we are done healing. However, as indicated above, there are many ups and downs along the journey of merging and healing.

Unexpected Findings-Mysteries of the Ocean

This category refers to sub-themes that emerged in my data that I had no idea would emerge and were not covered elsewhere. For example, the sub-theme of *Chaos-Which Way Do I Navigate in a Vortex* was unexpected but was described within

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category 8 – *Things outside your control – Oh No, An Iceberg!.* In this category some

unexpected findings appear such as: *Aggressive Personalities – Sharks in the Waters.*

Upon interviewing some colleagues, I found out that there were a few strong

personalities in the early stages of the merger that had an impact on perceptions of the

new college culture. This sub-theme emerged after I had interviewed my fifth candidate.

There was no indication at this point of data collection that any one personality or group

of individuals had an influence on perceptions within the merging corporate culture.

However, I started hearing the following comment from several mid-level managers at

North Metro Technical College about what was said by some aggressive individuals at

Chattahoochee Technical College. This came out in a conversation relating to the fact

that the newly merged college would have the name Chattahoochee Technical College.

This upset some of the managers at the other two colleges who would now lose their

college name in the merger. Here is the response from one mid-level manager:

> If I'm not mistaken, by Mr. D. (previous president of North Metro
>
> Technical College), that we were going to have a new name [I interjected
>
> "You were told? We were expecting a new name, too]. And I think that
>
> was my thought, too, of the people coming to me. And it was a huge blow
>
> because I felt like there was a lot of - everybody is proud of their own
>
> college and nobody wanted to give up their identity and so with
>
> Chattahoochee being so big it was perceived, and we were trying to fight
>
> the perception, that we had done something wrong and we were being
>
> taken over by Chattahoochee. That word got used and so we tried...But I
>
> think the decision to keep the name was just a huge morale – just bad.
>
> And that scared people.

At this point I became aware that the people at North Metro Technical College had a perception that Chattahoochee Technical College was taking over North Metro Technical College, especially when Chattahoochee Technical College was able to keep its name. Being an employee from Chattahoochee Technical College, I had not heard any of that kind of talk or conversation before or during the merger. Later, while interviewing subject number eight, another mid-level manager from North Metro Technical College, I heard the same kind of talk. This mid-level manager confirmed the earlier attitude that Chattahoochee Technical College was "taking over" North Metro Technical College. When I heard this for the second time, I asked where such a thing was heard or came from. This manager described that one of the Chattahoochee Technical College Administrators, whom I am describing as a shark for analogy purposes, had mentioned in several merger meetings that Chattahoochee was the larger and more experienced college, and that North Metro Technical College better get used to the bigger college being in charge. I heard this same type of dialogue again when I interviewed my tenth subject, who was also from North Metro Technical College. To corroborate this information, I sat down with a Vice President and straightforwardly asked her if she had heard these aggressive rumors. She mentioned that she had heard some administrators from Chattahoochee Technical College saying those kinds of comments. I also sat down with our college Provost to confirm some of these comments. He also stated that he heard these kinds of comments from our administrators. Although these comments were corroborated, it should be noted that these comments were attributed to different administrators. In other words, it was confirmed that more than one person was making these types of comments. Thus, I started to get the picture that several of our colleagues at North Metro Technical College were not pleased with the aggressive nature

of some of Chattahoochee's senior administrators. This shocked me tremendously.

These aggressive conversations distorted the perceptions that these three merging mid-

level managers had of Chattahoochee Technical College. Incidentally, as I talked with

each of the three subjects, they had told me that it took some time to realize that not

everyone at Chattahoochee Technical College felt the way these "sharks" felt. However,

these earlier attitudes left an imprint on the minds and feelings that these mid-level

managers had of their new colleagues of the merged college. It does damage to have

new managers coming onboard having dealt with some of these negative feelings and to

believe that some personnel were aggressive.

This category also includes *Unhappy Personalities – Crustacean Crabs are*

Among Us! This sub-theme covers how some managers were impacted by other events

and other negative personalities in the merger mix. When interviewing two of the mid-

level managers, I found out that not everyone was feeling positive about their new jobs

in the merged college. Once again, this was a shock to me because this was

approximately four to five months after the merger and I thought most mid-level

managers were moving forward and "healing." One mid-level manager was undergoing

organizational restructuring within his department and feeling unsure what the future

held for him. He stated he was "very cautious about the future" and at the time he

stated "I don't trust anybody." Another mid-level manager was initially not happy with

what her new role demanded. She was unhappy about issues of personalities she had to

work with, the enormous workload from the merged college, location of her office, the

people she would miss at the old campus, and many other things. The conversation was

clearly about a person who was still at another phase of the emotional process and what

Pritchett (2007) stated was "suffering." She was not at the "resolution" phase even four

months after the merger. Again, this clarified for me that not everyone moves through this process at the same time and same rates. It also indicates that it takes time for individual employees to come to terms with all the change in their lives. It should be noted, that this mid-level manager was coping very well in her job duties, and not showing these signs outwardly, but was conversing with me in confidentiality about her own feelings and perceptions.

Together these findings indicate what an organization going through change might expect and experience. These findings also revealed things that were "ah ha moments," definite surprises, and unexpected outcomes. These findings will all be discussed in Chapter Five next.

CHAPTER FIVE

DISCUSSION

Drawing on these findings, I offer several conclusions regarding how mid-level managers navigate a merger for themselves and their employees. A merger of this size was an enormous organizational change for the entire culture of all three merging colleges. The entire college had to go through a long drawn out placement regimen because there were more than three people applying for each position in the college. To make it a fair and equitable merger for all employees, there was a competitive open application process to place all employees. This drawn out process took several months and caused stress and anxiety not only among the mid-level managers, but among their employees that they had to help navigate the merger as well. The size and timeliness of this college's merger is the first major finding of this study. It overwhelmingly affected all mid-level managers and their staff. Not only did it affect the organizational structure of the college, but it took a very huge toll on the emotional well being of all the employees. All of the interviewees in this study experienced anxiety related to the "not knowing the outcome of their job placement." Hindsight is 20/20, and it clearly shows that the open competitive application for each position was the only choice the senior college administrators had, even though it caused great anxiety for several months. At this time, ten months after the merger, there are no legal lawsuits or actions relating to the selection and placement process used by the merged college. The practice of making the selection process an open competitive process was thus stressful and excruciatingly

long in the eyes of the employees going through the merger at the time, but clearly the only fair and equitable solution for merging three colleges, a first of its kind, in the Technical College System of Georgia.

Related to this anxiety was a variety of coping mechanisms used by mid-level managers to get through this merger process. Most tried to adopt a very positive attitude. In addition, they encouraged their employees to be optimistic as well. Several mid-level managers also took a "practical" approach to the merger by stating that "it is what it is" and "if I don't get a job, there will be other jobs that I can get." They saw the "bigger college picture" and saw how the merger was going to take place whether they liked it or not, and all tried to get onboard with the merger and the newly formed college. Several findings about how mid-level managers coped showed that they had a strong sense of their knowledge, skills, and abilities. They felt competent and several felt confident that they would be placed in a mid-level management position within the newly merged college. Not only did they take a positive approach, but they showed a strong sense of self-efficacy in their abilities to do a good job in the newly merged college. Not all of the mid-level managers liked my choice of the words "change agent," yet they all confirmed that they were onboard with helping the college move forward with best practices and resolutions for problems. All of the mid-level managers that I interviewed within the Student Services area of the college focused their answers and interviews on the outcomes for students. They were one hundred percent focused on how to help students and their answers were geared towards the volume of students from the merged college and the services provided. Other mid-level managers interviewed were able to discuss their experiences about themselves and their employees while the Student Services mid-level managers could not separate their

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answers from the impact on the students and the services offered. They perceived

themselves as advocates for students regardless of what they were experiencing

themselves. Yes, they answered the questions I asked about their experiences, but their

answers always described what the merger was doing for the student population. They

define their jobs and their roles as student advocates.

In regards to their employees, the mid-level managers communicated positive

responses such as "you will have a job" and "it might not be the same job or job title, but

you will have a job." They listened to their employees concerns and offered comfort and

support when and where possible. Several asked all employees to continue to work

towards "best practices" for the newly formed college and met with their teams often in

the early days. A couple of the mid-level managers had a hard time dealing early on

with an "unknown factor" in the Chattahoochee college culture. I referred to this in my

results as the presence of "sharks." With aggressive personalities fighting for position

and power, it made it difficult for newly merged personnel from other colleges to

warmly open up to the employees at Chattahoochee Technical College. The so called

"sharks" apparently had a negative impact on employee relations early on during the

merger. However, many months later, while interviewing these mid-level managers,

they seemed to indicate that some of that was misperceptions and misunderstandings

based on experiences with a few aggressive personalities. They were able to perceive

that the rest of the college was not as aggressive as they had originally thought.

However, undoing negative feelings took a long time to resolve and some personnel are

still not over those initial feelings.

Findings also indicated that two of the mid-level managers could be referred to as

"crustacean crabs," as they were not as happy in their new roles immediately following

the merger. They were unhappy because they were located in departments that were going through major restructuring time and again even after the merger of the college. This demonstrated that when the organizational structure is still in disarray and constant change, it makes the employees feel cautious, anxious, and a bit insecure about the stability of the organization. Both of these findings mentioned above – sharks and crabs, were total surprises in the data set. I had no indication that these were prevailing attitudes of these mid-level managers when I set out to investigate how they survived the merger. This brings me to another important finding of the data set – that emotional healing and well-being is truly an individual experience and definitively takes place at different times and at different rates for all mid-level managers. These healing results from my interviews explain some of my "preconceived" ideas about what "resolution" and "healing" means to individuals undergoing organizational change. I thought initially, that as an organization goes through change, employees experience similar types of emotions, attitudes, feelings, and responses at approximately the same rate similar to the chronology of the merger events. Initially, I assumed that after the merger actually took place all mid-level managers would be moving forward with their own personal feelings and attitudes of change. The results did not show this at all. Using excerpts from my interviews, data from ten subjects, as well as comments from my journals and notes, I have come to recognize that the category related to healing within a merged intuition is multi-faceted within individuals and departmental units of the college. Even if the merger occurred physically, the internal turmoil still persists several months after the merger. In this particular case study, turmoil and healing are still going on ten months after the merger and predicted to continue for eighteen months to two years by 100 percent of the mid-level managers. I used a thematic

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analysis approach as described by Reissman (2008) and Charmaz (2006) in delving into this idea of "healing" at the individual and college level. This category came up during early interviews and again in my own notes and journal entries. This idea of "healing" definitely ties into my main research question of how mid-level managers navigate change and how they survived the merger. It is a small piece of the overall analysis of how mid-level managers navigate change, but it shows that they recognize the change process and that it is much more extensive than Pritchett's (2007) model indicates. This initial category indicates that although the physical merger had taken place, the day-to-day functioning and healing of a college takes many more months than the actual chronology of the merging institution. It is now ten months after the merger and there is still much healing to attain. I have adapted this analytic approach from Riessman (2008) where she states, "...the principal analytical goal in this part of the project was not to generalize to the population but to interpret the meaning and function of stories embedded in interviews..." (p. 60). The notion of not yet healing and moving forward as one merged college was embedded in the interviews I had obtained. My data reveals attitudes that were in a different direction from my earlier notions of merger and acquisition recovery. In addition, Charmaz (2006) states, "The in-depth nature of an intensive interview fosters eliciting each participant's interpretation of his or her experience" (p. 25). Thus my greater awareness and understanding of what a "healed" college is was drawn out by the experiences of the interviewees. In Charmaz's (2006) chapter on coding in grounded theory practice, this one category seems evident not only from my interviews but from my own narrative notes and journal entries. Thus this theme has been grounded out from my narrative interviews and notes.

These findings also relate to the three organizational change models developed from Kurt Lewin's (1947) model. This original model was followed by changes made by Schein (1987) and Lippit (1958). The original model was also discussed by Marks (2003) in his field studies. These models were developed from the idea that initially merging organizations undergo an "unfreezing" of ideas that include an introduction that change is coming and why change is coming. The second phase includes "moving" or "changing" of organizational perceptions and behaviors where individuals move toward a new desired level of behavior in the organization. It is followed by a "refreezing" phase which establishes ways to make the new level of behavior "relatively secure against change." Schien's (1987) model and Lippit's (1958) model were slightly different but still included these basic components. The current study of the merger among the three technical colleges shows that the college administrators did their due diligence in following these phases. The notion of a task force being assembled by the State Office (TCSG) to study the feasibility of the merger, the discussion of the results and the ensuing merger with the individual colleges follows this notion of "unfreezing" current behavior and the preparation that the merger would take place. The visits by TCSG Commissioner Jackson to the college's campuses also reaffirm the "unfreezing" portion of the model. The "moving" or "changing" portion of Lewin's (1947) model also focuses on the many months that our college had different committees meeting to share best practices and to start combining the catalog, data bases, websites, etc. The entire application process where it took months to resolve the placement of employees into positions was also part of this "moving" or "changing" part of the merger. Finally, the "refreezing" stage of the model is still occurring and that is what my data confirms. The college is still establishing ways to make the new level of behavior the "One College –

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Seven Campuses" secure against further change. Basically, the organizational structure as depicted in our new organizational chart, new policies, and procedures are clicking into place for the merged college. This last stage however is not as definitive in terms of finite time. Parts of this process were definitely "refrozen" but many parts are still currently starting to "freeze into place." The basic organizational chart of the merged college was rolled out and selection and placement went into effect. The new catalog for all the programs was meshed together well before the actual July 1, 2009 merger date. The mission of the three colleges was basically the same since all Technical Colleges fall under a central office and state board; so the new blended mission was established well before the July 1, 2009 merger. Many policies governing student services and internal operations are still in the "refreezing stage" and many new procedures are being developed even ten months after the merger. Thus, from an organizational standpoint, the Lewin (1947) model applies to our college structure and behavior patterns and the data confirm this.

Schien's (1987) version of this organizational change model also can be highlighted with the recent merger. In Schein's version, details mention that the "unfreezing" stage includes ways of demonstrating a need for change. He discusses a disconfirmation or lack of confirmation, which demonstrates the need for change within the organization. This is basically what the central office of TCSG did by telling 13 of the colleges they would be merging. Schein also states there is a process of making employees feel anxiety and guilt by showing them a gap between what is and what should be better. I don't know if the current employees felt guilt or anxiety by being shown what would be better, but they did experience anxiety during the entire change process. His model also discusses the creation of psychological safety which involves

showing employees that change will not cause feeling of embarrassment, humiliation or loss of face, or self-esteem. This was certainly demonstrated by the repeated references by the central offices of TCSG and our upper administration that no one would lose a job with the college. His model included employee emotions and cognitions embedded in the phases of organizational change.

During the "changing" phase, Schien's (1987) model does include cognitive restructuring where employees see things differently than before and as a result they will act differently. This is true as the enormity of the current merger was rolled out to the three colleges early on to show the massive restructuring of the college. Everyone knew early on that things would be done differently. Also included in this stage is identification with a new model, mentor, leader, or consultant, and scanning the environment for new, relevant information. In the case of our merger, this indeed describes how employees were accepting the new merger. They were looking for verification from our college's upper administration on how the organizational chart was changing. There was a new college president and provost in place. There was also a new leadership team in charge of bringing the newly merged college forward. All eyes were on the new leadership of the college at this point. However, it should be noted that no one agent, leader model, or consultant was brought in from the outside to handle the change. In combination, the new president and upper leadership were considered the personnel to "identify" with.

"Refreezing" is the third stage of Schein's (1987) model and it involves the integration of the change for employees and it has two parts. The first part is a personal and individual component, where employers or managers must help the employee feel comfortable with the new behavior that is required to make the change succeed. The

second part or interpersonal component is where the employers or managers must make sure that the new behavior fits well with others who are significant in the organization. These other significant individuals must feel comfortable with the new behavior from the "changed" person. This stage of the model also fits well with the college merger. The data revealed that upper administrators and mid-level managers outwardly tried to comfort employees by letting them know they would still have a job. They made sure all the employees were on board with new policies and procedures.

The third model based on Lewin's (1947) model was developed by Lippitt (1958). This model also included the three stages the other two models included, but added two additional stages relating to a "change agent." This model does not seem to fit well with the merger from the current study. Lippit (1958) introduces a "change agent" initiating the change which is part of the "Establishment of a Change Relationship" between the change agent and the organization. This change agent also terminates the relationship as the change agent in the fifth phase called "Achieving a Termination in the Relationships." In the local study, there was no additional change agents introduced during the merger nor were they the ones that were terminated after the merger took place. In this respect, Lippit's (1958) model does not apply. The three similar phases of "unfreezing", "changing" and "refreezing" are the same similar phases that Lewin (1947) introduced in his research.

The model by Pritchett (2007), *Employee Guide to Mergers and Acquisitions,"* fits very neatly with the data gathered from this study. It is not that the model fits this data as much as the data grounds out some of the findings that Pritchett refers to in his emotional cycle of dealing with mergers and acquisitions. Pritchett clearly states that:

When you and other employees pick up the scent that your firm is a target

for an acquisition or merger, the mood in the company changes. Usually

the work climate is affected when the very first rumors develop that a

merger may be in the making. Word travels swiftly. And so does the

impact of being acquired or merged. The influence on your company will

be immediate, and also very predictable. There are three common

"psychological shockwaves" that you can expect to hit your organization.

It almost always happens. (p.5)

Pritchett (2007) calls these shockwaves "uncertainty and ambiguity," "mistrust," and

"self-preservation." These shockwaves naturally took place at the college. A certain

amount of uncertainty faced the college as talk of the merger settled into our everyday

language. Many employees were wondering about their future and the organizational

chart. We heard this in the voices of the mid-level managers describing their employee's

strong concerns before and during the merger process. The second shockwave makes

employees think about being acquired and makes them more wary and suspicious.

Again, we heard this in several quotes from Chapter Four. We heard it from mid-level

managers who thought that some aggressive personalities were trying to take them over

and we also heard it from a mid-level manager who spoke about her colleagues:

….Then, the biggest part of it was you had colleague against colleague

applying for the same job – [Interviewer interjected: Right. One spot for

three people] – because they were so thin as far as that mid-level

management, that conceivably, five or six people could apply for one job.

The people that you would have as friends and colleagues that you would

have been working together as peers among the schools now suddenly

became somewhat resentful, suspicious of what they were now doing, so

they would get the job over someone else. So communication among our

peers ceased because no one wanted to know what the other person was

doing to up their chances to get the position.

So Pritchett's model coincides with the data from the current study. The third

component called shockwave of "self-preservation" also applies to our merger. "Because

of all the uncertainty, and the lack of trust, employees get the feeling that they had

better be careful. They take steps to protect themselves (Pritchett, 2007, p. 7). This was

heard in the quote above and we also found it in other mid-level manager's thoughts

when they discussed trying to protect their departments and help assure their

employee's of continued employment.

The main part of Pritchett's (2007) model that was of interest to me was the

"Grief and Mourning" phases of natural and predictable emotional patterns when

people experience change or loss in their lives. He states:

In a merger situation there usually are some major changes people have to

deal with. Employees very often feel a strong sense of loss....Employees

are usually not well prepared for the changes these kinds of losses make in

their everyday lives. They may feel psychologically jolted. Mergers create

a great deal of personal stress for people...They will likely go through sort

of a grieving or mourning process, because grief often accompanies the

feelings of loss in our lives. Some people in the company will have to

struggle with strong feelings such as fear, worry, sorrow, anger, and regret.

In some employees it will be very obvious. In others you may have to look

closely to see the subtle signs of what's going on at an emotional level.

There are three main stages in this emotional cycle or mourning period.

(p.15)

Pritchett (2007) then goes on to describe the emotional pattern of employees going through a merger. He describes stage one as "shock and numbness." Employees enter this stage first and often are disbelieving, stunned, and sometimes immobilized. Although we did not see any immobilized mid-level managers, we did hear direct quotes of some mid-level managers who told their colleagues that it was going to happen and not to be disbelieving:

> So I was the person at the college that when the rumor – there was a big
> rumor, and people would say, 'Is it going to happen? I'm like, 'it's going to
> happen'. _____ [person's name] was one of those people. She goes, 'it's
> not going to happen.' I said, '_____ [person's name], it's going to
> happen.' I was like – well, I am a realist. I'm always realistic with myself,
> so that was not – that's not unusual. So, I guess that I had some time to
> make a personal strategy for myself, and that made me feel very
> comfortable, because I don't like surprises. I don't think people in general
> like surprises unless it's like a surprise birthday party, and then you might
> like it. Or if you win the lottery and that's a surprise, then you might like
> that. In general, I just – don't think people like surprises. So I made sure
> that I was not going to be surprised, and I wasn't surprised.

This mid-level manager was not disbelieving, but he had to deal with several colleagues who were. Pritchett (2007) goes on to describe the second stage as "suffering." This is where we see mourning and brooding. We saw this with our "crustacean crabs," very strong mid-level managers who were suffering silently. They were not outwardly

suffering, but their stories and frustrations were clearly in this stage of the emotional cycle.

Finally, Pritchett (2007) describes the third stage of the emotional cycle "resolution." Here the organization begins to "get well," as employees collectively begin to feel better. This is the section I had difficulty in understanding because every employee I questioned mentioned that the college still had some time to go before the "healing" would be finished. The data revealed that all of the interviewees had a different time frame for this healing process. Pritchett (2007) describes this as the stage "where people begin to display some curiosity and hopefulness about the merger situation" (p. 18). Ideally he states, "a real sense of enthusiasm and optimism will develop as part of this stage" (p. 18). He does elaborate that people move through the three stages quicker than others and that there could be emotional aftershocks or setbacks. This part of the description matches our data explicitly. Some managers were unhappy and not healing or perceiving the college as healing as fast as others. Some were happy at first and then suffered more loss when they were further restructured in the organizational chart. There seems to be a small contradiction apparent in mid-level managers regarding this emotional healing. They were all practicing good management and leadership skills such as being "practical," "positive," and "listening" to employees' concerns, yet each one of them thought the college had an 18 month to a two year healing process. On the one hand, they were showing optimism and enthusiasm, and some of them were very comfortable in their new roles in the merged college and personally felt good about their jobs. On the other hand, however, their overall conclusions were that the college still had a ways to go towards healing. The data does not contradict Pritchett's (2007) model as much as it shows much more "depth" to the

human condition of healing. There is a practical "healing" for the college, there is a personal "healing and satisfaction" for each employee regarding their own experiences, there is the outward display of emotions in the workplace, and then there are the underlying feelings that come out in a qualitative interview.   This is where some of my initial confusion developed. Mid-level managers were showing signs of healing and comfort in their work, but yet they all felt the college had a ways to go, and several still had some personal baggage to cope and deal with regarding the merged college.

It should be noted that there is never a truly "healed" state of being in an institution of higher education. There is always some issue, crisis, or current problem that the administration is addressing at any given time. Thus, it should be noted that throughout this paper, the discussion of a "healed" college or "healed" personal sense of well-being for individual employees was meant in terms of a "better adjustment" to the merger of the three colleges instead of a permanent "static healed state of being." Thus, for the purpose of this discussion, it was meant to mean a moving forward of the college as a merged entity where employees felt as if they were "one" merged college culture instead of three separate colleges that were thrown together. In terms of individual feelings, the "healing" meant that mid-level managers were at ease in their new position or role with the merged college and have come to terms with the emotional upheaval of change.

The data clearly and directly relates to some of the published field studies described in chapter two. Looking at this literature we find that the study by Allen, Freeman, Reizenstein, and Rentz (1995) looked at survivor's attitudes as they embraced the new organizational culture. They found that from time one (one month following downsizing) to time 2 (four months after downsizing) attitudes were less favorable.

While attitudes did not significantly improve from time 2 (four months after downsizing) to time 3 (16 months after downsizing), the direction of the means indicated that attitudes were becoming more favorable. Although the current study was not a quantitative study, the data are somewhat similar in that four months after the merger may be too soon to see the "healing" that I was asking mid-level managers. Perhaps the 16 months more accurately reflects the time it takes employees to begin to feel more comfortable with the newly merged college or organization. They also found that career stage moderated the effect of time on organizational commitment and role overload. No comparisons can be made as all of the individuals I interviewed have been mid-level managers for some time. I did not compare how long mid-level managers were in their roles, but I did note that one hundred percent were on board with the merger and working towards the healing of the newly merged college. All were committed to the organization and their new roles. Several mid-level managers discussed the scope of their jobs increasing tremendously within the merged college, but none expressed that they were overloaded or overwhelmed.

Buono and Bowditch's (2001) study mirrors our merger. Their findings showed that mergers and acquisitions have a life of their own with shifting periods of waiting and frenzied activities, a sense of escalating momentum, cascading minor changes, rising tensions and conflicts, and stressful uncertainties. This is very similar to the experiences of our mid-level employees and their employees who came to them for guidance and support. It should be noted that whether due to finances or lack of knowledge (speculation here), the current study within the three college merger did not develop enough "transition teams" and "team building" exercises that these authors recommended. Nor did the college invest in "merger previews" with presentations,

workshops, and hotlines. Perhaps more of these transitional exercises and counseling could have ebbed the anxieties, chaos, and frustrations of the merging personnel. Most of the college's mid-level managers and their employees were fearful for job security and were unsure about where they would fit into the new organization. Perhaps more team building exercises and counseling might have abated the anxiety levels of the current employees. One strategy recommended by Bruno and Bowditch (2001) was open communication. In the current study, that was seen to be an effective tool for dealing with anxious employees. The mid-level managers coached, counseled, and listened to the concerns of their employees.

It should also be noted that Schweiger, Ivancevich, and Power (1987) found that managers who took control of their personal situation were found to be very effective. This was evident in the current merger. Managers had a high sense of self-efficacy and felt positive about their own situation. As mentioned in Chapter Four, one mid-level manager stated:

> I don't know why, I just never thought I wasn't going to be there. I always saw my place, I had an idea of what I wanted to do, and that's what I focused on. I focused on moving forward to what it was that I had decided I wanted to do, and that was to work with the _____ [name of unit/department/program].

In focusing on positive outcomes of mergers, Marks and Mirvis (1992) focused on rebuilding after the merger and focused on dealing with "survivor sickness." They found that if managers do not invest in post-merger team building they will pay through the loss of key talent and disappointing results. These findings went hand in hand with Marks' (2003) more recent research discussing the difficulty of mergers in his book

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entitled *Charging Back Up the Hill: Workplace Recovery after Mergers, Acquisitions,*

and Downsizings. He discussed that mergers, acquisitions, and downsizings are very

difficult to manage, stating "75% of all corporate combinations fail. He talked about the

psychological reactions to transition that include many of the emotional reactions that

Pritchett (2007) refers to: survivor syndrome, loss of confidence in management,

cynicism and distrust, decreased morale, reduced loyalty, dismal outlook, and loss of

control. He describes the groundwork for what he calls a "good recovery." This good

recovery includes building upon the model discussed earlier in this paper which was

developed by Lewin (1947). He discussed using the simple model proposed by Lewin

(1947) for change management: unfreezing, changing, and refreezing. When applying

this to mergers he described the unfreezing portion as the time to change present

attitudes and behaviors. In the present study which focused on a three college merger,

this unfreezing applies to the pre-merger introduction of the idea of three colleges

coming together to merge as one college. This would include specific reasoning of who,

what, when, and why as part of the introduction to the idea of a merger approaching.

The second stage of changing applied to a merger might involve experiential learning

through official meetings, planning for changes within the colleges, and clearly defining

that the three colleges would come together as one college, with one president, one

leadership team, and one set of policies and procedures necessary to run such a

tremendous college. The third step of refreezing includes "establishing processes that

reinforce the desired behaviors or perceptions and lock them into the organization"

(p.58). Marks (2003) also states, "Unless the refreezing occurs, it is all too easy for

organizations and their people to slip back into familiar and accustomed patterns" (p.

59). In the current study, this refreezing is critical to success otherwise employees

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would simply believe that they were three independent colleges conducting business as usual. If handled correctly, "A merger can be successful despite the way that change often disrupts the status quo, jars people and changes not only the work place operations but the organizational culture as well" (p. 73). He also encouraged companies to build in opportunities for a new organizational order. Successful transitions and mergers have limitless opportunities and leaders may seek to enhance: teamwork, customer service, innovation, risk taking, use of technology, speed to market, or other characteristics of organizational life. Offering these opportunities to employees, results in a wide range of benefits to any work organization (p.73). He recommended that many transition programs were "future oriented" and they fail to consider that people in the workplace are not ready to let go and move on immediately. To move forward in leading and managing work place recovery, Marks (2003) encouraged the elements of empathy, engagement, energy and enforcement for success.

In summarizing, it is important to state again that Marks (2003) used Lewin's (1947) model on organizational change and integrated the model in a very positive way. He focused on using the model to explain the phases of organizational change and how to implement a recovery program that will make the merger or acquisition a positive success. Lewin's (1947) third stage was termed "refreezing" which Marks (2003) uses as a foundation for building an effective recovery program:

> People will not accept the new until they let go of the old. They need time
> to pass through denial, anger, and other reactions to loss, as well as to
> move through the phases of ending the old, dealing with hang time, and
> experimenting and getting comfortable with the new. However, this time
> required for adaptation presents a rare opportunity, after people have

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been unfrozen by the turmoil of transition, to cast a new mold and refreeze

attitudes and behaviors congruent with the desired new organizational

order. To achieve these opportunities to the fullest extent possible, leaders

must proactively help people recover from the unintended consequences

of transition and regain the self-confidence and motivation needed to

triumph in their charge up the hill to capture the prize that awaits. (p. 256)

The mid-level managers of this college did not have the opportunities to develop

successful "recovery programs" as described by the literature, but they utilized many of

the tools available to them to get their employees and themselves through the most

difficult parts of the transition before, during, and after the merger. The practiced good

management and leadership skills such as actively listening to their employees, lending

comfort to their concerns, and working in teams to develop best practices for the

merged college's policies and procedures. They approached their jobs and their

employees concerns with practical logic and realistic outcomes.

Overall, much of the literature that was discussed regarding successful mergers,

ties directly into the "lived experiences" and stories of this merger told from surviving

mid-level managers. Due to the fact that the Technical College System of Georgia is in

tight financial constraints at this time, there were not available central office, or local

college resources to build the pre-merger previews, team-building, and "recovery"

programs that the business and industry mergers suggest would add to merger success.

In hindsight, employees of Chattahoochee Technical College feel very lucky to have

survived the merger only scathed by the long and timely process of placing everyone

within the new organizational chart. Other than the normal chaos from merging three

colleges' policies and procedures, the only negative outcomes were related to the long

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placement process, and the few unexpected issues related to the negative feelings experienced by personnel exposed to the sharks or the aggressive personalities described in Chapter Four above.

The eight mini-theories of job satisfaction and worker motivation which were explored in the literature review can be used to describe mid-level manager's reactions and coping mechanisms going through this particular merger. All eight theories show ways that the work in organizations can be designed to enhance employee motivation and job satisfaction. All eight theories discuss ways that employees connect their efforts to outcomes and thus their perceptions of rewards in the workplace. Individually, each theory can be applied as a management technique to assist mid-level managers in helping their employees navigate change in the workplace. In this section, I will discuss some of the findings found in the interviews that show a connection to some of these theories and the possible impact they had in the merger. It should be noted that I did not ask individual mid-level managers questions about each specific theory, but instead asked the general question of how they helped their employees navigate the merger.

According to Burke (2002), the process of applying Maslow's (1954) Need Theory and Herzberg's (1966) Two-Factor Theory to a merger would entail enriching individual's job, providing autonomy, recognition, and achievement opportunities, and empowering employees by giving them more authority and decision-making abilities. Did the mid-level managers in this study do this for their employees? The answer to this question is perhaps in some ways yes, and in other ways no. Individual mid-level managers were unable to give decision-making abilities to their employees during the merger because so many individuals did not know who was in charge before and during the merger. Part of this problem had to do with incumbent employees finishing up their

tenure in some positions, and new mid-level managers waiting in the wings to assume the responsibilities after July 1, 2009. Empowering employees with decision-making abilities was more curtailed during this time period. However, providing enrichment in their jobs as well as recognition and achievement opportunities, were visible during this time period. Mid-level managers were encouraging their employees to do their jobs and to maintain professional work while all these merger decisions were being made. Several mid-level managers asked their employees to continue to volunteer "best practices" to be shared with the employees on committees merging policies and procedures from the three colleges. This included encouraging open dialogue and discussions with counterparts from the other three colleges. In some respects this was job enriching. This was not the full application of the two theories but it is easy to see how employees within the merger were given some ownership in the new college and made them feel proud to be part of the newly merged college.

Vroom (1964) and Lawler (1963) developed V-I-E theory which focuses on worker motivation and addresses the key terms of Valence, Instrumentality and Expectancy. Burke (1994) summarized this application to mergers as "People will be highly motivated when they believe that their behavior will lead to certain rewards, that these rewards are worthwhile and valuable and that they are able to perform at a level that will result in the attainment of the rewards" (p.157). This application could be seen in much of the outcomes described during the selection process of employees within the college. Much of the organizational chart was now open for competitive application. Many, many people within the college applied for several jobs hoping to be rewarded with new work status and outcomes. In this way, V-I-E theory was applied by mid-level

managers applying for new positions in the college, and by their employees beneath them.

Although not directly termed "positive reinforcement" by any single manager in the interviews, Positive Reinforcement Theory by Skinner (1948) relates to worker motivation and satisfaction and was applied by one mid-level manager. In terms of mergers, this theory can be related to the work environment by focusing on the intent of controlling the conditions of how employees are rewarded in the work place (see description, page 32). We heard from one mid-level manager that she wanted all her employees following the same policies and procedures. She rewarded those who followed the rules. This was easy to see in her management style:

> I said, 'Like it or not, whether it's right or not, whether it's the best thing or
> not is beside the point. It is what it is. We are where we are. You either
> jump on the ship or and you paddle with us, or you sink or swim. And if
> you don't like it, I'm sure there are other colleges hiring. But this is what
> we're going to be. This is where we're going. Come along for the ride or
> find another boat to paddle on.' And that made some a little mad by my
> doing that.

This manager's view was that employees would be rewarded if they followed the rules. She was basically letting employees know that if they didn't like the rules they could find another job (i.e., punishment would be that they could leave the college and find another job). Again, this wasn't a manager thinking of applying a specific theory to use in the workplace as much as it was the data showing that some mid-level managers used this technique (and application of the theory) to make successful outcomes occur during this transition period.

Taken together, these theories have described how the mid-level managers encouraged their employees during this transition period. The interviews with mid-level managers showed that they engaged in management techniques aimed at leading their employees to continued job satisfaction and job motivation.

Implications for Future Research

I have learned that there are many methods to investigate qualitative data. Both the inductive analyses of initial coding (Charmaz 2006, Glaser 1978, and Glaser and Strauss 1967) and comparative methods analysis (Merriam 1998), along with narrative analysis (Reissman, 2008, and Charmaz 2006) tend to triangulate some of my findings.

Some categories of "healing" fit in nicely with a narrative approach. The notion of "chaos" and the feelings that mid-level managers were experiencing chaos in the day-to-day operations of the college immediately following the merger also lends itself to a narrative approach. The findings from this study have come from both inductive analysis and narrative analysis and both types of analysis enhance the credibility of the findings. In addition, I have learned that multiple approaches to analysis can fit one research case study. In this study, data came from qualitative interviews, journal entries and notes, and merger website information occurring during the merger. The data was analyzed by both an inductive analysis and narrative analysis that fits this particular case study perfectly.

The actual findings have added depth to the qualitative literature in the areas of mid-level managers, mergers, nonprofits, and higher education. More specifically it fills the void of qualitative literature that explores how mid-level managers navigate organizational change and how they help their employees navigate such change in higher education institutions. Most studies found in the review of the literature were

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quantitative studies and none focused on institutions of higher education. The majority

of research is found in the business and industry sector and none told the stories with

the voices of mid-level managers navigating organizational change such as a merger. As

mentioned in Chapter One of this dissertation, there is very little literature focusing on

mid-level managers in academia. They are truly the "unsung" heroes of education.

Rosser (2000) reminds us that understanding the complexity of midlevel

administrators' work-life perceptions (especially related to morale) is important to

higher education organizations because those perceptions ultimately may influence how

well they do their jobs and how long they stay at them (p. 11). She describes a need for

case studies to provide a substantive contribution because such research provides a

basis for identification and measurement of particular issues that can be examined in a

national context (p. 10). Specifically she states, "Expanding the research on midlevel

administrators from a local to a national perspective would provide midlevel

administrators with the attention they deserve in the academy" (p. 10). In retrospect,

this study does show how these mid-level managers dealt with organizational change

and how they weathered the transitional period. This study has fulfilled one of Rosser's

(2000) concerns.

Specifically, we learned that coping and healing with organizational change is a

personal experience for these mid-level managers. It is a complex "in-depth" process

that involves: telling of their personal experiences, describing their perceptions of the

overall institution and its progress in the merger, managing their own behaviors and

perceptions, and the advice and support they give their employees. They are the work

horses of their institutions and they do not wear their emotions outwardly. They are

practical and logical, while giving concern and comfort to their subordinates. They do

not discuss their feelings while on the job. They are role models of positive enthusiasm and they utilize techniques from the literature (whether they know it or not) on how to motivate their employees and enhance job satisfaction. Just these findings alone on "healing" add depth to the literature and point the direction for future research.

Where do we go from here? This study leads the way for other academic institutions undergoing mergers. The Technical College System of Georgia has just completed its first wave of mergers. This study will assist other institutions going through mergers within the TCSG system. Some of the lessons learned have direct implications for these future mergers. The college did not invest resources nor did the central office finance some of the luxuries that business and industry have used for successful mergers. This study did not show the use of "systematic post-merger team building," nor did it employ "pre-merger pre-views" that the literature suggested. Yet, despite the lack of these added programs, the college survived the merger and is moving forward. However, if these types of initiatives were implemented, would the chaos and or anxiety felt by the mid-level managers and the employees following the merger been less dramatic? This study indicates that future colleges should use these "interventions" in an effort to reduce some of the anxiety and chaos felt by employees.

Another unique contribution of this study is that never before have three colleges within the SACS accrediting agency's region merged. Due to the enormity of merging three colleges there was an open competitive application process for employees at these colleges. No previous mergers within academia have ever merged three colleges and had an open, fair, and equitable placement system like this merger. The resulting length of time and anxiety that employees felt having to patiently wait for each position to be filled took a big toll on the feelings and behaviors of both mid-level managers and their

subordinates. This study adds to the literature on lengthy organizational restructuring and job selection and placement.   Chattahoochee Technical College has survived and has grown from this experience and we have learned that it takes time to turn an Ocean Liner!

Limitations of this Study

One limitation of this particular study was that only the voices of a sample of ten mid-level managers at Chattahoochee Technical College were heard. More mid-level managers need to be heard at other merging colleges throughout the Technical College System of Georgia (TCSG) and other institutions of higher education across the country. It is important to explore if other mid-level managers experience the same kinds of attitudes and behaviors experienced during this particular merger.

A second limitation of this case study was that it captured stories of mid-level managers at one point in time, four to five months after the merger. It was beyond the scope of this dissertation to study on-going stories over a continued period of time. The mid-level managers in this study projected that it would take eighteen months to two years before the merged college was "healed" as one college with a newly evolved culture. Only a study looking at healing over multiple time periods can confirm these mid-level manager's predictions.

Lastly, another limitation of this study was that it heard the voices of mid-level managers from academia even though the literature points to a conceptual framework adapted from business and industry. More comparisons need to be made between mid-level managers in academia and mid-level managers in industry to see if these results can be applied to a broader field.

Recommendations for Improved Practice in the Field of Higher Education

Below are some recommendations for improved practice in the field of higher education relating to mergers and the journey mid-level managers make on the journey with their employees.

- Qualitative research gives a more enlightened understanding of the in-depth experiences of what going through a merger really means to the employees. The voices of the mid-level managers express what these un-sung heroes go through during major organizational change. None of their unique stories could have been captured in a quantitative research design.

- Implementing the "best practices" for mergers such as listed in the literature might have helped with the emotional turmoil that employees experienced. These included: merger pre-views, more systematic post-merger team-building exercises, and participative decision-making from employees. Including these strategies in other merging organizations might tell another story about emotional well-being and healing that goes on during organizational change.

- Continued research beyond the initial post-merger interviews would be helpful in better understanding the "healing" process for organizational cultures undergoing change. How long does it really take to feel "healed"? Only follow-up research could answer this question.

- The case study is bounded by this college's merger. It would be recommended for improved practice to find out more from the other mergers within the Technical College System of Georgia.

- Doing more comparative research between organizational change within "for profit" and "non-profit" organizations can tell us how similar these experiences are for those in business and industry and higher education institutions.

As mentioned in appendix G, this study held academic rigor and trustworthiness, but only more research can expand on this initial gap in the literature.

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APPENDIX A

Process of Conducting the Review of the Literature

The following is a brief review of the steps included in gathering the research for the review of the literature.   Initially, a search in Galileo was conducted by the subject topic area of "business." Within the business area the link for "management and information systems" was utilized to more closely find articles related to management of organizations. The second step involved typing in the key word "mergers" without specifying any dates but specifically checking off the boxes for "full-text articles" and "peer-reviewed" articles to gather articles of substance for reviewing. These steps resulted in finding 9,600 articles available for review. The next step involved narrowing the search down to articles with the key descriptors of "mergers" and "cultures" and this resulted in a total of 73 relevant articles. In general the descriptors that were associated with this search involved the following key terms: consolidation, organizational behavior, corporate culture, personnel management, employee attitudes. These descriptors were more specific than the general topic of mergers and cultures. Personnel management helped me to focus my articles that were related to people as opposed to other issues revolving around mergers. So in sum, the descriptors were more specific and much more helpful than just key terms of "mergers" and "culture."

In further modifying the search, using the descriptors of "personnel management" and "mergers" 143 retrieved articles were reviewed to see which articles

were most relevant to mergers and employee attitudes and behaviors. From this search other Galileo data bases were browsed to include additional research. Instead of using just the "business area" and the database "Business Source Complete" the "Social Sciences" area was browsed with the same descriptors. This allowed a search of several more databases such as: ERIC(at EBSCOhost), Professional Development Collection, Academic Search Complete, ERIC (at www.eric.ed.gov), and psycINFO. In total with all these databases, 40 articles were obtained which appeared to be most relevant to the major topic of interest. All were reviewed for possible inclusion in this review of the literature.

It should be noted that the Dissertations database was reviewed. Hundreds of dissertations related to "culture" and some related to "mergers" but none of these were related to mergers and corporate cultures within an organization.

Lastly, for writing a coherent paper, only articles related to empirical findings and theoretical frameworks that most closely aligned with the three major content areas listed above in the "contents of the literature review" section were chosen.

APPENDIX B

INFORMED CONSENT FORM

Dear Participant,

You are invited to participate in a research study project conducted as part of the requirements for the Doctorate in Education (Ed.D.) at the University of Georgia.

For this project I will be conducting interviews to learn about your experiences during the recent Technical College System of Georgia merger. Specifically, I want to learn how mid-level managers navigated the merger and how they were able to guide their employees through the merger. I want to hear your story about your experiences with the merging of three technical colleges into one college over the past several months. Since mid-level managers are a very important part of the day-to-day operations of the college, it is important to understand how the merger impacted you and your employees. Your participation will help college administrators, and TCSG better understand how to handle mergers and organizational change in the future. It will be most helpful to hear the voices of key employees during such a transitional period.

The research will be supervised by my dissertation advisor, Dr. J. Douglas Toma, who will also have access to the interviews, as recorded, as well as transcripts and report of the research. We will protect your privacy through the study through the use of a pseudonym and you will have the right to review and correct the transcripts of your interview.

For this project, you will be asked to

- Participate in a tape-recorded interview. The interview will be approximately 60-minutes with us discussing your merger story and experiences.
- Provide basic information regarding your professional background.
- Share your story about your own experiences during the recent merger of the three technical colleges.
- Participate in a brief follow-up interview either in person, via email, or by phone to review the transcripts from the first interview.

For this project I will

- Provide information and answer any questions you may have regarding the project, including this consent form.
- Schedule and conduct an initial interview of approximately 60 minutes. A second interview will be conducted summer quarter, for approximately 45 minutes.
- Possibly request follow-up information after the interview, either by phone, e-mail, or in person. Internet communications are insecure and there is a limit to the confidentiality that can be guaranteed due to the technology itself. However, once the materials are received by the researcher, standard confidentiality procedures will be employed.
- Assign you a pseudonym to ensure confidentiality both in the transcript and the research paper.
- Make sure that no individually-identifiable information about you, or provided by you during the research, will be shared with others without your written permission.
- Allow you to review the interview transcript to check for accuracy.
- Erase any interview tapes and destroy any master list linking pseudonyms to participant identities within 90 days after the completion of the research project.

Your participation is voluntary. You can refuse to participate or withdraw your participation at any time should you become uncomfortable without penalty or loss of benefits to which you are otherwise entitled. No risks are expected from this study. Although I will tape record the initial interviews with you, there should be no potential psychological stress or discomfort experienced. Such psychological stress or discomfort is completely minimized by making sure you understand that this interview is performed strictly on a volunteer basis and by guaranteeing confidentiality through the use of pseduonyms. Participants may withdraw from the sudy at any time.If you have any questions or concerns, feel free to contact me at 770-528-4579 or the dissertation advisor, Dr. J. Douglas Toma at 706-542-4836.

I hope you will enjoy this opportunity to share your experiences and viewpoints regarding your experiences during the recent Technical College System of Georgia merger. Thank you very much for your help with my doctoral research.

Sincerely,

Jodie C. Vangrov

Dissertation Co-Investigator

Dr. J. Douglas Toma

Assistant Professor, the University of Georgia

Please sign both copies, keep one copy and return one to the researcher.

_____   _____

Signature of Researcher   Date

_____   _____

Signature of Participant   Date

For questions or problems about your rights please call or write: Chairperson, Institutional Review Board, the University of Georgia, 612 Boyd Graduate Studies Research Center, Athens, Georgia 30602-7411; Telephone (706) 542-3199; E-Mail Address IRB@uga.edu.

APPENDIX C

Interview Protocol

Preliminary Questions:

11. How did you as a mid-level managers navigate the merger process, in other words, how did you "survive" the merger?

12. How did you guide and mange your own employees as they went through this organizational change?

Subsequent Questions:

13. Tell me about the events leading up to the recent merger?

14. Tell me your survival story?

15. What were some of the "bumps" in the road?

16. How you have "coped" with the changes brought about by the merger?

17. Tell me how things are different? How things are the same?

18. What will you take away with you as you look back on this period of organizational change?

APPENDIX D

Substantive Change Timeline

CHATTAHOOCHEE TECHNICAL COLLEGE

Name of the Institution: Chattahoochee Technical College

Nature of the Substantive Change: Merger of Chattahoochee Technical College, Appalachian Technical College and North Metro Technical College into one institution under the operational name of Chattahoochee Technical College.

Date: February 23, 2009

By signing below, we attest to the following:

1. That Chattahoochee Technical College (*name of institution*) has attached a complete and accurate overview of the proposed Substantive Change.

2. That Chattahoochee Technical College (*name of institution*) has provided complete and accurate disclosure of timely information regarding compliance with the selected sections of the *Principles of Accreditation* affected by this Substantive Change.

Name and signature of the President: Sanford R. Chandler, Ed. D.

Name and signature of the Accreditation Liaison: Nancy N. Beaver

COC Staff Member assigned to the Institution: Dr. Rudy Jackson, Vice President

Part I. Overview

A. Provide the names, addresses, and current accreditations of the institutions to be merged or consolidated. Provide the proposed name for the new institution.

Names and Addresses:

Chattahoochee Technical College
980 South Cobb Drive
Marietta, Georgia 30060
http://www.chattcollege.com

North Metro Technical College
5198 Ross Road
Acworth, Georgia 30102
http://www.northmetrotech.edu

Appalachian Technical College
100 Campus Drive
Jasper, Georgia 30143
http://www.appalachiantech.edu

Accreditations:

Chattahoochee Technical College (CTC) and North Metro Technical Colleges (NMTC) are both accredited by the Commission on Colleges of the Southern Association of Colleges and Schools (COC/SACS) as Level 1 institutions approved to offer associate degrees. Appalachian Technical College (ATC) was awarded Candidacy status as a Level 1 institution by the Commission on Colleges in December 2007. ATC is also accredited by the Commission of the Council on Occupational Education.

Name of New Institution: Chattahoochee Technical College

Campus Locations: Appalachian, Marietta, Mountain View, North Metro, Paulding, South Cobb, Woodstock

B. Provide a timeline for the proposed merger/consolidation. Discuss the rationale for the change. Include the dates for state approval and implementation of the change along with supporting documentation. Briefly outline the process in place to ensure appropriate merging/consolidating of programs and services. List institutional strengths that facilitate implementing the proposed change.

Timeline:

Chattahoochee Technical College (CTC), North Metro Technical College (NMTC), and Appalachian Technical College (ATC) are public two-year colleges in the Technical College System of Georgia (TCSG). The State Board of Technical and Adult Education (SBTAE) is the governing board for all three colleges and is the legal body responsible for establishing standards, regulations and policies for the operation of the TCSG.

In February, 2008, a taskforce was created by the Technical College System of Georgia (TCSG) to research the viability of merging Chattahoochee Technical College (CTC) and North Metro Technical College (NMTC) as the model for the first of several mergers within the System. The Tri-County Taskforce was composed of key community and business leaders and educators from Cobb, Paulding and Bartow Counties, the official service areas of both colleges at that time, as well as members of each college's current local Board of Directors. (Exhibit 1A-1) The Taskforce reviewed the issue and recommended that the two colleges merge.

The State Board of Technical and Adult Education (SBTAE) authorized the Commissioner of the TCSG to provide to the Board at its August meeting a plan to merge CTC and NMTC. (Exhibit 1A − 2) The SBTAE reviewed and considered the plan and the recommendation on August 7, 2008, and gave preliminary approval to proceed with the merger of CTC and NMTC. (Exhibit 1A-3) At its September 4, 2008 meeting, the SBTAE gave preliminary approval to proceed with the merger of twelve additional colleges in the system and granted authority to the Commissioner to appoint presidents for the merged institutions. (Exhibit 1-A4)

On October 2, 2008, Dr. Sanford R. Chandler, Ed. D. was appointed as President of Chattahoochee Technical College and president designee of the merged colleges. (Exhibit 1A-5) Mr. Ron Newcomb was appointed as Provost for the merged colleges.

The SBTAE decided on October 15, 2008 to include Appalachian Technical College in the NMTC and CTC merger. The combined colleges filed a prospectus with the Commission on Colleges of the Southern Association of Colleges and Schools on October 20, 2008.

Dr. Chandler assumed the role as the President of CTC on November 1, 2008. Mr. Ron Newcomb also assumed the role of Provost on this same date. On November 12 and 13th, Dr. Chandler led the existing Executive Team at the three colleges in a retreat to develop an implementation strategy for the merger of the colleges.

The Commission voted to accept the prospectus in December 2008 and granted the colleges permission to move forward with the merger. (Exhibit 1A-6) The senior leadership for the new college was selected in January 2009. This Executive Team is now tasked with executing the implementation plan.

The State Board of Technical and Adult Education approved the proposal to name the new merged college Chattahoochee Technical College in February 2009. (Exhibit 1A-7)

The merging of programs, services, and documents is progressing rapidly with the expectation of having a completely merged college by June 30, 2009. Already many institutional policies and procedures have been integrated resulting in the completion of the CTC College Catalog, Employee Handbook, IE Plan and Strategic Plan. Also, the existing CTC College website is currently being updated to reflect these changes.

Rationale:

Although Chattahoochee Technical College, North Metro Technical College and Appalachian Technical College have successfully served their communities in providing technical education and services to their constituents in meeting the mission of the Technical College System of Georgia, there is a need to streamline and expand these services to more effectively serve the rapidly growing population of the service area. This service area, located in Atlanta's northwest corridor, continues to grow in both population and business and industry and includes one of the fastest growing areas in the state, the intersection of Cobb, Bartow, and Cherokee counties where NMTC is located. The TCSG, in ensuring that the agency is a good steward of the state's resources, must frequently analyze its current configuration of colleges and service-delivery areas to determine the best use of resources. In February 2008, Commissioner Ron Jackson formed a taskforce to measure the feasibility of merging CTC and NMTC as the first of several mergers across the state in the TCSG system, as previously mentioned. Later in the process, ATC was added into the plans for the merger.

Given the close proximity of the three colleges and the shared service areas, the colleges often find themselves in direct competition for students, board members, business partnerships and resources. Merging the three institutions will provide many benefits to the communities they serve by creating a single, integrated presence. This streamlined effort will work to raise the new College's visibility in the area with its unified mission. The ability to better utilize limited resources with a single focus will allow the merged institution to be more responsive to innovation and technological advances and to provide better resources for students and a business community that relies on technical education to provide it with a well-trained workforce. The efficient use of resources of a merged institution will allow current programs to be strengthened and/or expanded and new programs to be added, thereby providing students with increased program options and enhanced services. The combined resources and "voice" of the merged college will better serve the citizens by developing stronger partnerships, decreasing competition for resources and fundraising, eliminating duplication, and raising the College's visibility at the state level.

SACS Timeline

February - June 2008	Taskforce Created by Technical College System of Georgia (TCSG) to Research Viability of Merging Chattahoochee Technical College (CTC) and North Metro Technical College (NMTC). Taskforce made recommendation to TCSG to merge the two Colleges.
June 5, 2008	Recommendation made to State Board of Technical and Adult Education (SBTAE) of TCSG to merge the two Colleges. SBTAE requests a merger plan.
August 7, 2008	SBTAE gives approval based on merger plan provided by TCSG and grants authority to appoint a President for the College. SBTAE adds the Cherokee County service area to CTC's service area.
October 1, 2008	CTC sends letter of notification to SACS requesting to add the Woodstock campus of Appalachian Technical College to CTC as a fourth satellite campus.
October 2, 2008	Dr. Sanford Chandler is appointed as President of the College. Mr. Ron Newcomb is appointed as Provost
October 10, 2009	CTC and NMTC file a Prospectus for Substantive Change with the Commission for the merger of CTC and North Metro Technical College.
October 15, 2008	TCSG granted administrative approval to add all of ATC, with the exception of Fannin County, to the CTC and NMTC merger.
October 20, 2008	CTC, NMTC and ATC re-file with the Commission a Prospectus for Substantive Change to include ATC into the

	merger.
November 1, 2008	Dr. Sanford Chandler assumes Presidency for CTC and president designee of the merged College. Mr. Ron Newcomb assumes the position of Provost for the merged College.
November 6, 2008	SBTAE approved the administrative merger including Appalachian Technical College as part of the merger of Chattahoochee Technical College and North Metro Technical College approved. Commissioner Jackson explained this action was taken at the request of Appalachian Tech's full, unanimous board.
November 12th and 13th, 2008	Dr. Chandler leads the existing administration of all three Colleges in a leadership retreat to begin planning for the merger.
December 9, 2008	The Commission accepts the prospectus and grants the colleges permission to move forward with the merger.
January 7, 2009	The Commission rescinds the request for a separate prospectus for the addition of the Woodstock campus as CTC's 4th satellite campus since it is now a part of the merger.
January 23, 2009	Executive Council/Merger Committee for the merged College selected and announced.
February 5, 2009	SBTAE approves the name of the new College as Chattahoochee Technical College
March 5, 2009	SBTAE approves the new mission statement for the merged College.
March 30, 2009	CTC welcomes SACS team to campus for a Substantive Change visit.

Georgia Trend Magazine, April 2010

Georgia Trend

School Ties

Krista Reese published April 2010

Georgia's technical college system is consolidating 13 of its schools into six, as enrollments climb and budgets plummet. Officials say the schools are thriving.

On paper, it made good sense and looked fairly easy. In the fall of 2008, in the face of a collapsing economy, the state's technical colleges faced dramatically increased enrollment from the newly unemployed seeking retraining – and dramatically lower budgets from decreased tax collections. Says Ron Jackson, commissioner of the Technical College System of Georgia (TCSG), "It's one of the financial realities of state government today. We had considered consolidating colleges at some point, simply as a good business model. It's what any well-run private corporation would do. The slowing economy added impetus."

Even with the benefit of hindsight, the mergers still make good sense. In fact, the colleges are thriving. With enrollments far above expectations and mandatory furloughs for its college employees, the TCSG has managed to tighten its belt without cutting off circulation. The consolidations were achieved without closing any colleges or campuses. More students are now within reach of more courses.

West Georgia Tech's merger with West Central, for example, allowed it to offer associates' degrees, making the school, in effect, a junior college. Systemwide, many technical colleges have now recorded several consecutive enrollment records, and the fall 2009 numbers leaped even higher, with an average of 24 percent.

Several schools rose 30 to 40 percent (Atlanta Tech, North Georgia Tech, Sandersville Tech, Albany Tech and Lanier Tech). The last tech college set to merge has the highest fall quarter increase: Valdosta Tech, which will merge with East Central Tech this July, posted a record 45 percent increase. That final merger will mark a total of 13 schools consolidating into six.

The commissioner and his staff figured that by merging several of the state's 33 colleges – retaining faculty for that increasing enrollment, but eliminating redundant administrative jobs – the state could save $3.5 million while expanding services, facilities and courses for students. That would go a long way towards meeting a required 8 to 10 percent budget cut for 2009. Fortunately, the schools' rapid growth meant that tuition and fees would offset the loss in 2009 of $6.4 million in federal funding, which continued to erode in 2010. (TCSG's 2010 budget weighs in at $595 million, nearly $23 million less than the 2009 figure, from the loss of most of its state funding as well.)

Cultural Impact
Between plan and outcome, however, the 18-month process of actually blending the schools proved a bit rocky. Although administrators and staff braced themselves for technical and bureaucratic hurdles from the U.S. Department of Education and the Southern Association of Colleges and Schools (SACS, the regional accreditation authority), they may have underestimated the mergers' cultural and social impact.

"I can safely say that no one in our seven-county area was overly excited about the news," West Georgia Tech President Skip Sullivan says dryly. Chattahoochee Tech's President San-ford Chandler says most protestors were afraid of "losing something … losing identity, losing contacts, losing prestige … losing their school."

Says United Community Bank CEO Steve Holcomb, former board chair at Appalachian Tech, which has now merged into Chattahoochee Tech: "Im-agine if two high schools from across county lines were told that they would be consolidated. Oh my heavens! People would be outraged. There's so much community pride."

Sullivan puts a finer point on it: "Think what would happen if it was announced that UGA and Georgia Tech were merging."

Although there was some adverse reaction, college presidents and board members say few students or alumni were among the concerned callers and emailers. In fact, from the start, most most of the schools' consumers seemed to recognize that they would actually benefit from the changes. However, community leaders, legislators and some businesspeople feared that the special relationships they enjoyed with their local tech colleges might be threatened, or that the facility that they had worked so hard to establish or expand would now be given over to another town.

The passionate response to the consolidations indicates how valuable the tech colleges have become to their communities, the educators say. With a pledge to train workers for nearly any business, large or small, or help in other ways including establishing facilities and methods via the school system's popular QuickStart program, the schools have become a vital cog in their regions' economic engines. They are small (with a 2008 average of about 4,300 students) and conveniently located (a college or satellite campus within 40 miles of any community), and their curricula are specialized to the needs of the community.

Tech colleges have proven to be critical links in bringing in new industry such as the Kia plant in West Point, with training provided by West Georgia Tech. Middle Georgia Tech supplies aerospace training for Warner Robbins AFB; Columbus Tech customizes courses for Aflac. Clients range from jet maker Gulfstream, which relies on Savannah Tech training, to mom-and-pop shops. "They wanted to be assured of the same level of service," says Ray Perren, president of Valdosta Tech.

The schools are also highly effective. With the system's "guaranteed education" (free retraining on request by employers), the most recent figures put employment rates for graduates at 94 percent within six months of earning a certificate or diploma. (That includes an estimated 8 percent who establish entrepreneurial businesses like barber-shops and hair salons.) An additional 3 percent go on to earn four-year degrees. State HOPE grants, combined with federal Pell grants, cover most or all tuition and book costs for students earning degrees and certificates; about 80 percent of tech college students go to school with some combination of HOPE and Pell.

Jackson and his staff eventually settled on 13 schools for the mergers. They hoped that pairing two schools in neighboring areas would result in students gaining more facilities, courses and access to faculty. Each campus would remain in its community, in full working order, with "the vast majority" of faculty retained, says Jackson. However, the critical difference would be that only one college president would serve for both schools, and only one set of administrative staff, such as vice presidents and provosts. Very small colleges – especially those that already had presidential vacancies – were studied carefully. "It didn't make much sense to have a college with 1,000 students and a $2 million administrative budget," says Jackson.

Many of the slashed positions were achieved through attrition. "We were fortunate that most administrators were baby boomers at retirement age," says Jackson. Adjuncts and part-timers were often hired at less expense to replace full-time faculty as they left, or to address growing demand.

With a solid plan in place, Jackson moved quickly, submitting his new spreadsheets for the governor's approv-al. That led to another unforeseen bout of blowback: Most legislators first learned of the schools' upcoming mergers when they read it in the governor's budget. Many felt blindsided. "I've apologized many times, and continue to do so, for the way this was rolled out to the legislature," says Jackson. "But we had to move quickly. Now, of course, they see that it had to be done."

The Name Game
Jackson sped forward, allowing local administrators and faculty to begin work on one of the thorniest issues they would face: Naming the newly merged schools.

Some, like West Georgia Tech and Chattahoochee Tech, simply took on the names of the larger campus, often with resistance from those who mourned the "loss" of their smaller school. Others have chosen completely new names, and perhaps none with the originality and instant geographic recognition of the upcoming East Central and Valdosta Tech merger: Wiregrass Georgia Technical College.

"We also considered Georgia Pines and Gateway Tech," President Perren says, to avoid the usual "directional" name of tech colleges (north, west, east, etc.). In the end, administrators and faculty opted for a brand that characterized both the geographic region and its people. The spiny grass is as much a part of the southeast Georgia landscape as its piney woods and sandy soil, and figures largely in the region's folklore and literature.

At West Georgia Tech, President Skip Sullivan says cultural issues like the name change were among the hardest aspects of his merger. "The No. 1 challenge was staying student-focused, versus addressing every petty concern about loss of autonomy."

Of course, even the basic problems for a merger of two schools – with a drastically reduced administrative staff – were challenging enough. College staffs worked to be sure that parallel, but entirely different, systems for hiring, purchasing, arranging meetings and buying books were standardized between campuses. More importantly, they hurried against deadlines to ensure their schools' accreditation with SACS, and to be sure their students could continue to receive financial aid from the U.S. Department of Education – all while continuing to teach students. Says Perren, "It was kind of like changing the oil with the engine running."

A Sharp Departure
Chattahoochee Tech's merger, complete in July of 2009, upped the ante for the entire system when another school's board suddenly suggested a sharp departure from the commissioner's plan. Initially, the TCSG had planned for Chattahoochee Tech to merge with North Metro Tech, and for Appalachian Tech to merge with North Georgia Tech. Says former Appalachian Tech board chair Holcomb: "They [the board] had no problem with the merger – they immediately saw that it had to be done. But they also looked at how the students would have to travel – across the mountain – to go to North Georgia Tech [which has campuses in Blairsville, Avalon and Clarkesville]. Here, our whole lives are carried out along that I-575-Highway 515 corridor – it's where we live, work and go to school. They knew that a merger along those north-south lines would make much more sense. And they really wanted to be a part of the Marietta campus [of Chattahoochee Tech]. They wanted to know if we could suggest merging with Chattahoochee Tech and North Metro instead."

Holcomb knew that swift action would be the only hope of success. He called Jackson immediately and ex-plained the board's reaction. Jackson agreed. "I'm excited," he told Holcomb.

Both men worked to push the plan into action. Reports a stunned Holcomb, "Our board meeting was at 4 p.m. on a Tuesday. By Thursday noon, it was done." Appalachian Tech's northernmost campus, in Fannin County's Epworth, chose to join with geographically closer North Georgia Tech, but its Cherokee and Pickens county campuses (in Woodstock and Jasper) joined with North Metro and Chattahoochee. The schools' boards, presidents and the commissioner had all signed off on the arrangement. "I've been in business for a long, long time," says Holcomb, "and I've never seen government work that fast."

However, the first-ever merger of three technical colleges tripled the administrative paperwork and bureaucratic red tape for Chattahoochee Tech president Chandler. "Within three weeks, I realized what I had gotten myself into," he chuckles. His schools' area covers six counties and 25 metro areas, serving 1.2 million people. Among the chores: Making sure no student among the three institutions happened to have the same ID number, which would threaten funding.

Chandler also found cultural issues of the merger challenging, and he faced them with a series of informal coffees at the various campuses, inviting faculty, staff and/or the public to meet each other and to ask questions. "Over the seven or eight months, I put 3,300 miles a month on my car," he says. "But it paid off."

Some schools, like West Georgia Tech, look to their sports teams to help bring together campuses. The Golden Knights play other tech colleges, some of which offer basketball, volleyball, baseball and softball. Future Wiregrass Tech PR representative Angela Hobby is also ramping up the school's use of another favorite college student pastime: social media. Along with building Facebook fan pages that will encourage, for example, culinary arts students to compare notes and make friends, "We're encouraging professors to write blogs that will get students outside the box and see what's going on in their field of study," she says. In addition, online "distance learning" courses are gaining popularity.

With all mergers scheduled for completion in July of this year, Commis-sioner Jackson says there are no plans for further consolidations. "Let's just say that we're not anxiously awaiting the next round of mergers," he says. "It has taken enough energy and manpower to get us here. If we have to, we will, but we're hoping for a year's respite. The system is merger-weary right now."

By all indications, the effort has been a smashing success. Already the state's largest technical college, Chattahoo-chee Tech, has been catapulted into the realm of a mid-sized college, thanks to its post-merger enrollment. With a 27 percent increase this year, its 11,363 winter 2010 enrollment rivals better-known four-year schools.

The schools are preparing a new and better-trained workforce for a more technologically advanced workplace. Administrators say their courses in anything relating to health are crammed; those workers will meet a projected need for the field expected to grow fastest in coming years. Students are being more cautious about fields that have demonstrated volatility – like internet-related jobs – in favor of occupations that seem to weather hard times and satisfy a need for independence, such as the culinary arts, truck driving and plumbing. College presidents re-port that their facilities are jammed.

The bottom line, however, has improved: "Our students are getting jobs," says Jackson.

Triple Play: Chattahoochee Technical College President Sanford Chandler's school is the product of three institutions that merged into one – a first for the technical college system.

APPENDIX G

Qualitative Rigor as Defined by Qualitative Terms

This study followed the methodology described in chapter three of this dissertation. Briefly I would like to confirm the trustworthiness and authenticity of this research using the concepts of credibility, transferability, dependability and confirmability.

In discussing the credibility of this study we raise the issue of internal validity. How congruent are the findings of this study with what is really out there in the natural setting? Toma (2005) used Fetterman's (1989) definition of "credibility"" in the study as the "degree to which it rings true to the natives and colleagues in the field." Credibility in this study was enhanced by each of the interviewees conducting a member check and confirming that I captured their descriptions of their experiences in navigating the merger. These member checks which were conducted captured the true meanings of the data and were approved of by each of the interviewees.

In discussing "transferability" I am asking if this study has some external validity and can be meaningful to other colleges going through a merger in the Technical College System of Georgia. To enhance transferability one strategy would have been to use more than this one case study. Since that was beyond the scope of this study, perhaps other researchers can verify some of the findings at our college when comparing our case to their case. This college merger is one of the first waves of mergers in the TCSG system. Since all colleges follow the State Board policies and procedures and all colleges

are governed by the central office, it stands that much of the mergers in our system will have many experiences similar to ours.

The notion of "dependability" involves accommodating changes in the environment studied and in the research design itself. This occurs as the understanding of the researcher becomes more refined over the course of data collection (Toma, 2005, p.416). In my study, I have demonstrated this "dependability" on several occasions. After interviewing the first candidate and finding out that she felt the college was still in a state of chaos and that it would take two years to heal from the effects of the merger, I felt compelled to ask each of my remaining candidates the same question. It became important to find out if all mid-level managers felt the college was a long way from healing. I had assumed that because it was four months post merger when I conducted the interviews that all mid-level managers would be in the third stage of emotional healing that Pritchett (2007) had referred to as "resolution." I found out that this is a very in-depth cycle of healing and the probing of candidate one was able to broaden my interviewing questions to include the notion of "healing" for each candidate. Another example of dependability came after interviewing subject number five and finding out that perhaps there were some "sharks" in the waters. This notion was confirmed by subjects, eight and ten as well. To further corroborate these findings I sat down with a Vice President and the Provost to further probe this notion of sharks in the waters. These aggressive personalities that I came to discover had a huge impact on some of the mid-level manager's perceptions of the employees of Chattahoochee Technical College. I took every opportunity to make sure that questions were refined and the data was "dependable." Merriam (1998) refers to this a constant comparative method of data analysis. Constantly, I would look at the findings from my previous

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interviewees and refine and clarify the themes that tended to arise from these earlier interviews.

The fourth term that helps to describe rigor in qualitative research is "confirmability." This is the concept that data can be confirmed by someone other than the researcher. It is similar to "objectivity" within a quantitative methodology. According to Toma (2005, p.417), objectivity here does require that another researcher can confirm findings, but it is not the researcher who is objective; rather it is the findings themselves. In other words, the findings should be a very accurate reflection of the mid-level managers who participated in this merger study and not some "fabrication" based on my own biases and prejudices. Once again the member checks confirmed that I captured the accurate reflections of the mid-level managers. In addition, I held many impromptu conversations over the previous months with many employees who also confirmed much of my findings (off the record). I talked to the Provost on several occasions and other mid-level managers who were not part of the data set. These notes can be found in an "audit trail" of my notes, journals and interviewee transcripts. I conducted the study designed in chapter three and I followed this methodology all throughout this study. Taken together these standards of rigor as defined by credibility, transferability, dependability, and conformability have allowed me to state that my study is authentic and trustworthy.

Festival days turn into festival nights (6)â€¦ with balls, galas, receptions, and fireworks â€" (7)â€¦ from the 14th Street Pier and set to music. The mainstay of Boardwalk Weekend is the Arts and Crafts Show. To the delight of thousands, this juried show lines the beach with the work of skilled artists and craftsmen.Â Ocean Spray Cranberry World on the Plymouth waterfront is a unique and free exhibit (1)â€¦ the history, (2)â€¦ and uses of the native American berry. Visit the (3)â€¦ kitchen and sample cranberry products. Open (4)â€¦Â Tim Brady & Sons, which takes you deep sea and sport fishing, whale watching and on (9)â€¦ harbor cruises aboard the Mary Elizabeth. Try a â€œhands-onâ€ experience with Lobster Tales, located at Town Wharf. On the afterdeck there is a several level housing which contains the navigating bridge, accommodation and domestic spaces. There is such navigational equipment in the wheelhouse of the navigating bridge as radar, AIS, log, repeater, or steering compass, echo sounder and others. The master compass is on the monkey island (a small platform above the wheelhouse). In the chartroom of the navigating bridge publications, charts and pilot books are kept. Below the navigating bridge there are accommodation spaces, such as crewâ€™s cabins, radioroom, messrooms for officers and ratings, dispensary. There Precautions you will take while navigating within ice limit Obtain latest ice information by all available means. Mark ice limit on appropriate charts. Plot all floating-icebergs position and their direction of drifting and speed. Follow the route recommended by the Ice Superintendent via.Â If visibility decreases while the vessel is in the ice, speed should be reduced until the vessel can be stopped within the distance of visibility, if in doubt, the vessel must stop until the visibility improves. If the vessel is stopped, the propeller(s) should be kept turning at low revolutions to prevent ice from building up around the stem. Follow open water patches and lighter ice areas even if initially it involves large deviations of course.