FOLLOW HER LEAD: UNDERSTANDING THE
LEADERSHIP BEHAVIORS OF
WOMEN EXECUTIVES

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ABSTRACT

FOLLOW HER LEAD: UNDERSTANDING THE
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Critics of business school education cite a widening gap between scholarship and practice, and suggest both are necessary to both educate and inform the other (Bennis & O’Toole, 2005; Mintzberg, 2004; Pfeffer & Fong, 2002, 2004; Tushman, O’Reilly, Fenollosa, Kleinbaum, & McGrath, 2007). By generating rigorous, relevant research and helping corporations integrate theory into practice, executive education and other business school leaders can lessen the gap, increase the impact, and mend the relationships between corporations and the institution (Tushman et al, 2007). This research on the leadership behaviors of women executives addresses a gap in both research and practice (Helgesen, 1990; Kanter, 1977; Levitt, 2010; Marshall, 1995; Rosener, 1990).
The Leadership Practices Inventory (LPI) and a brief demographic questionnaire were completed by 320 executives (director, vice president or above) in a metropolitan Midwestern region of the United States in 2007-2008. The results determined that the frequency with which women executives demonstrated 29 of the 30 leadership behaviors did not differ from their male counterparts. Executive women reported that they used one leadership behavior, “find ways to celebrate accomplishments” significantly more frequently than executive men.

Additionally, individual follow-up interviews were conducted with ten women and two men in executive level roles. The data were transcribed, coded, and analyzed using the grounded theory method. From the data, ten theories emerged as the essential leadership skills women need in order to be successful in an executive level role. These are

- Develop self awareness
- Get results
- Value relationships
- Recognize and reward performance
- Foster collaboration
- Take risks
- Be resilient
- Learn to assimilate
- Value lifelong learning
- Find balance
This research may be valuable for current and aspiring women executives, their sponsoring corporations, and the executive education professionals who help women leaders develop the skills they need to be successful in executive roles. The findings inform executive education professionals and equip them to better meet the needs of their student population. Leveraging this research to inform practice also enables higher education to address a concern of critics of business school education.
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I’d also like to express my love and thanks to my family and friends, in particular my daughter Molly, who doesn’t recall a time when her mom wasn’t in school or working on her “paper.” Thank you for your love and patience. Now that this is complete, we have plenty of time to play together.
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CHAPTER 1
INTRODUCTION

The challenges facing institutions of higher education associated with economics, demographics, politics, globalization, competition, and technology are greater than ever. In addition to traditional challenges such as access and graduation rates, higher education must adapt to changing technologies, new demands and expectations from students, rising costs, changes in financial aid policies, changing demographics of the student population and more (Brubacher & Rudy, 2004; Oblinger, 2010; Zusman, 2011).

“Current changes are transforming higher education to an extent perhaps greater than since the end of World War II” (Zusman, 2011, p. 115). Stated in a report developed by the U.S. Secretary of Education’s Commission on the Future of Higher Education,

We may still have more than our share of the world’s best universities. But a lot of other countries have followed our lead, and they are now educating more of their citizens to more advanced levels than we are. Worse, they are passing us by at a time when education is more important to our collective prosperity than ever.

(U.S. Secretary of Education, 2006, p. x)

The commission also stated, “As higher education evolves in unexpected ways, this new landscape demands innovation and flexibility from the institutions that serve the nation’s learners” (U.S. Secretary of Education, 2006, p. x).
Like higher education, corporations and other organizations that employ college students after graduation are also undergoing a time of rapid change. In addition to the traditional challenges facing the business world, changing demographics of the U.S. workforce and the pending retirement of a large segment of the baby boomer generation makes the need for talented workers more critical than ever (Adler 2001; Catalyst, 2002; Catalyst, 2011). Organizations facing the competition of a global market are paying closer attention than ever before to leveraging the strengths and skills of the diverse workforce by developing leadership at all levels (Adler, 2001; Catalyst, 2002, 2004; Merrill-Sands, Kickul, & Ingols, 2005).

Bersin and Associates estimate that more than $67 billion was spent on corporate training in 2011 (O’Leonard, 2012). Many top colleges and universities have sponsored executive education, continuing education and corporate training programs for decades, although the effectiveness of business education and executive education programs is debatable (Mintzberg, 2004; Mitroff, 2004; Tushman, O’Reilly, Fenollosa, Kleinbaum, & McGrath, 2007). Professional schools in general, and business schools in particular, have faced increasing criticism because of the widening gap between rigorous research, necessary to inform the field, and connected practice, needed to inform the research (Pfeffer & Fong, 2002; Tushman et al, 2007). The concerns about of the effectiveness of business school education are not new (Gordon & Howell; 1959, Roethlisberger, 1977). However, the gap between business school research and business practice is wider than ever and risks threatening the relevance and legitimacy of business school education (Pfeffer & Fong, 2002, 2004; Tushman et al, 2007).
Higher education must make significant improvements if it is to educate students who can meet the demands of today’s workforce (Zusman, 2011). A 2011 study of the views of students and parents as customers found that business school deans, department chairs and other academic leaders who adopt a market orientation could generate increases in enrollment, in student retention rates, in future giving by alumni and in improvements in rankings by outside organizations (Webster & Hammond, 2011).

Because of the close relationships executive education has with business leaders and the corporations that sponsor their participation, executive education has the opportunity to realign and help strengthen the relationship between business educators and business leaders. By generating research relevant to the corporation and helping integrate this research into practice, executive education can help address practical challenges facing the business world. For example, numerous articles and books have been written with advice for executives on how to lead successfully (Adler & Izraeli, 1988; Bennis, 1989; Conger, 1989; DePree, 1989; Drucker, 1967; Kouzes & Posner, 1995). Yet there is still much more to learn about leadership. “Leadership is one of the most observed and least understood phenomena on earth” (Burns, 1995, p. 9).

Despite the advances women have made in the workplace, “there is limited research addressing women's leadership” (Levitt, 2010, p. 68). Research conducted on women in the workplace prior to 1990 tended to focus on discrimination and bias and not on success factors (Sharpe, 2000). While women have had a role in the workforce for decades, the relative absence of women in corporate executive roles today is still concerning (Belkin, 2003; Catalyst, 2002; Catalyst, 2004, Catalyst, 2011; Sharpe, 2000;
Tischler, 2004; U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics, 2011; Wallis, 2004). Despite an early interest in the 1980s and early 1990s in the role of women in the workplace (Helgesen, 1990; Loden, 1985; Rosener, 1990), still today there is no clear agreement and understanding regarding the similarities and differences between males and females in executive roles or what leadership behaviors women executives must possess to be successful in executive level roles.

Those leading university-based executive education programs face a complex challenge. Traditional models are largely based upon masculine models of leadership (Koenig, Eagly, Mitchell & Ristikari, 2011). In order to understand how to develop the most skilled and effective workforce, a deeper understanding of women leaders, how to help them advance and be successful in executive roles, how men and women leaders are similar and/or different, and what women who are currently in those roles perceive as the leadership behaviors that helped to drive their success must be attained. By generating this knowledge, executive education professionals can help organizations maximize the full potential of the workforce.

By advocating for more rigorous and relevant research from the academy that can be applied in practice by corporate leaders, executive educators can be the catalyst for change by helping to generate research that informs practice and connects the practical aspects of the corporation to scholarship, while also fostering a stronger relationship between higher education and corporate leaders. By meeting the needs of the corporation, leaders in higher education and executive education professionals can
narrow the gap between research and practice, addressing their own need to develop stronger relationships with corporations. This research is intended to help to do.

**Purpose of the study**

The purpose of this study was to examine the leadership behaviors of women executives, in order to generate new research-based knowledge for the field of executive education. By developing a greater understanding of the similarities and differences between executive women and executive men, as well as which leadership behaviors women executives believe they need to demonstrate to be successful in those roles, executive education professionals will be better able to meet the needs of their student population, including business leaders and the corporations that sponsor them. Both corporations and the institutions of higher education that help support their educational needs will benefit from the findings of this research, allowing both to impact practice through scholarship.

**Research questions**

Research question #1: Are there significant differences in the leadership behaviors of executive women and executive men? If women utilize different leadership behaviors in executive level roles than their male colleagues, then different leadership development approaches for aspiring women executives could be considered than those used for men. This understanding will help deepen the knowledge of leadership development professionals and the field of executive education and better inform those professionals so that proper steps can be taken to develop both male and females for executive positions.
Research question #2: What leadership skills must women possess in order to be successful in executive level roles. Now that a generation of women has advanced into executive roles, this research examined the leadership skills a sample of women identified as being most critical to their success in a senior level or executive role.

Definition of terms

The following are definitions of terms that were be used throughout this study.

Leader – one who motivates or inspires others to take an action that they might not otherwise take on their own; does not refer exclusively to the person at the top level of an organization (Kouzes & Posner, 1987)

Leadership – the act of motivating or inspiring another person to take an action that they might not otherwise take on their own (Kouzes & Posner, 1987)

Leadership behavior – refers to the 30 individual leadership behaviors identified by Posner and Kouzes (1987), as being predictive of current and future leadership effectiveness, when leaders engage in them frequently

Leadership practice – refers to the 5 practices of leadership as described by Kouzes and Posner (1987), each practice of which includes 6 leadership behaviors (1 practice=6 behaviors; 5 practices=30 behaviors). These include Challenging the Process, Inspiring a Shared Vision, Enabling Others to Act, Modeling the Way, and Encouraging the Heart

Executive – someone with administrative or managerial competency (Merriam-Webster online dictionary, n.d.), typically a manager of managers, director, vice-president or above in an organization
C-level – refers to the most senior level executive positions in an organization, including chief executive officer, chief financial officer, chief information officer, etc.

Gender - behavioral, cultural, or psychological traits generally associated with being either male or female

Rationale

Diverse populations, including women business leaders, continue to face a number of challenges to their success in business, including role beliefs, work-life balance issues, and the glass ceiling (Coughlin, Wingard & Hollihan, 2005; Heffernan, 2002; Loden, 1985; Rosener, 1995; Wilson, 2004). Despite the attention paid to the role of women in the workplace over the last several decades, gender representation in the executive ranks still remains a significant barrier to women’s success (Adler, 2001; Catalyst, 2004; Sharpe, 2000). A better understanding of leadership behaviors of women executives will help not only women, but also the corporations looking to develop a diverse, talented workforce and the organizational development and executive education professionals who serve them. Rigorous research applied in practice can strengthen the relationship between the academy and corporations.

Assumptions

There are a number of assumptions made in conducting this research.

1. Leadership skills are important to one’s success in an executive role.
2. Leadership is an observable set of skills and abilities that can be learned and improved.
3. Executives who participate in this study do not differ from non-participating executives on key relevant criteria.

4. There is some parity in executive roles from one organization to the next.

5. The executives participating in the study report their frequency of leadership behaviors honestly and without systematic bias.

6. The executives interviewed in this study were honest in their discussions about leadership.

Limitations

There were several limitations present in this study. For one, the research was limited to those executives who were willing to participate. Subjects were not required to participate and were not otherwise obligated because of their work or employer demands. Secondly, the assessment of leadership skills of executives involved self-reports, thus only measuring the participating executive’s perception of their own leadership skills, and not the perceptions of others. Third, while the instrument itself is psychometrically sound, it is brief, somewhat limited in scope, and may not measure all possible aspects of preferred leadership behaviors. Finally, there may have been inherent biases of the researcher because of her prior experience in executive education and interest in gender and leadership issues. This issue was at the forefront of concern of the researcher as the study progressed and was routinely monitored to limit bias, meaning that the researcher paused to reflect critically throughout the data collection and analysis to be sure that the interpretations were based upon the actual experiences and not on any prior experiences with the instrument, the participants interviewed or the organizations that they represent.
Delimitations

The researcher chose to place several parameters on this study. The study’s population included corporate, government and non-profit executives from 40 or more organizations to which the researcher had access. It is delimited to executives from organizations primarily in one Midwestern region. While the survey data included a broad spectrum of professionals, the final analysis of survey data was delimited to executives (directors, vice president’s and c-level [chief executive officer, chief financial officer, chief information officer, etc] executives) only.

Scope

This study was limited to professionals working in small, medium and large organizations in a medium-sized, Midwestern metropolitan area in the United States. Participants represented more than 40 organizations, including large corporations, not for profits, government agencies, educational institutions and others. They represented a wide variety of industries, including professional services, manufacturing, health care, government, and education. Initial data were gathered from leaders at all levels in the organization, although the findings were pared down to focus on the responses of those who are currently working in an executive level (director, vice president or c-level executive) position, who may or may not have an interest in leadership or a relationship with the researcher and the institution they represent.

Summary

Despite the efforts to advance women into the management ranks of organizations, representation of women in executive roles is still lacking. Women bring
unique and effective leadership behaviors to the workplace. This research aimed to understand the similarities and differences in leadership behaviors of executive women and executive men, and to further examine the leadership skills that women reported were necessary to success in executive roles.

**Organization of the study**

This research is presented in six chapters. Chapter I is the statement of the problem, and includes the background of the study, the purpose of the study, the research question, definition of terms, rationale, assumptions, limitations, delimitations, scope, summary and organization of the study. Chapter II is the review of the literature relevant to this research. Chapter III is the research methodology for both the quantitative and qualitative portions of the study.

Because of the large amount of data collected and presented, the results of data analysis are split into two chapters. Chapter IV presents the results from the quantitative data, and chapter V outlines the results from the qualitative data. Chapter VI includes a summary of the findings, conclusions, the researcher’s interpretations and recommendations for future research.
CHAPTER II
REVIEW OF THE LITERATURE

“Leadership is like the Abominable Snowman, whose footprints are everywhere but who is nowhere to be seen” (Bennis & Nanus, 1985, p. 20).

This purpose of this chapter is to provide a review of the most influential literature on leadership, presenting an historical review of patterns in leadership research, and highlighting the writings that focus on women and leadership. Particular attention was paid to the literature that addresses women leaders and the leadership behaviors found to attribute to their advancement and success into executive level positions.

Understanding leadership

The interest in understanding what makes for good leadership is not new. Socrates, Aristotle and Plato described man’s interactions with one another and their efforts to lead them in a particular direction. Stogdill (1974) reported that the term leader appeared in the English language as early as the 1300s. A review of literature in the 1990s found more than 350 definitions of leadership (Jablonski, 1996). An online search of the term leadership found more than 187,000,000 results (Google, March, 28, 2007). Kouzes and Posner (1993) said “leadership is a reciprocal relationship between those who choose to lead and those who decide to follow” (p. 1) and that “leadership is a set of
skills and practices that can be learned regardless of whether or not one is in a formal management position” (p. 3).

Countless pages have been devoted to understanding and categorizing leadership: democratic versus autocratic, participative versus directive, relationship-oriented versus task-oriented, transformational versus transactional, situational factors, organizational factors, and the interaction between leadership and other factors such as personal traits, intellectual capacity, followership, culture, values, motivation, power, charisma, and more (Bass, 1981; Bennis & Nanus, 1985; Burns, 1978; Conger, 1989; Kanter, 1977; Kouzes & Posner, 1987; Stogdill, 1974). Burns (1978) said that “one of the most universal cravings of our time is a hunger for compelling and creative leadership” (p. 8). Fairholm (1998) believed that understanding leadership “is the single most important intellectual task of this generation, and leading is the most needed skill” (p. xiii). Fulmer and Conger (2004) referred to leadership as the most critical capability for successful senior managers. Yet, despite need and interest, good leadership is still rarely found in companies (2004).

Although the interest in classifying leadership is great, the clear understanding of leadership is far more elusive. “Leadership is a complex process. It involves an individual’s personality, style, knowledge and skills, life experiences, and the organizational/work context” (Csoka, 1998, p. 231). When explaining the role of leadership studies and where the study of leadership stood at the time, McCall and Lombardo (1978) said “if leadership is bright orange, leadership research is slate gray” (p. 3). Mello (2003) reported of “an extensive and, at times, very confusing body of
literature that illustrates the complexity of the study, practice, and understanding of leadership” (p. 344). He further said “No single theory has been able to capture the essence of leadership and/or leadership dynamics. Students often become frustrated at the array and range of somewhat disparate and contradictory theories they encounter” (Mello, 2003, p. 344).

**Leadership theories**

Perhaps an understanding of leadership begins with first understanding the origin of leadership studies. The modern era of leadership studies likely began in the mid 19th century through the work of historian Thomas Carlyle’s “great man” theory, which examined history through the biographies of notable men like Shakespeare, Napoleon and Lincoln. His explorations of these “heroes” identified attributes and inspirations that contributed to their unique abilities as leaders, leading to the early prevailing belief that leaders were born “great men” (Carlyle, 1888). This is relevant in the context of this study as it demonstrates the early influence of gender of leadership, as great leaders were initially considered to be only men.

van Maurik (2001) identified four distinct classifications or “generations” of leadership thinking, but warned against trying to compartmentalize leadership theory into timeframes or generations.

Although it is true that the progression of thinking tends to follow a sequential path, it is quite possible for elements of one generation to crop up much later in the writings of someone who would not normally think of himself or herself as
being of that school. Consequently, it is fair to say that each generation has added something to the overall debate on leadership and that the debate continues. (p. 3)

**Trait theory.** Stemming from of the “great man” theory of the mid 19th century, an interest emerged in the 1920s and 1930s in the traits that effective leaders were born with, so that these traits could be identified in others who could lead into the future (van Maurik, 2001). Rooted in the field of psychology, Allport, Freud, Jung and others examined the personality or other inherent traits that led individuals to behave in a certain way, good or bad, so that they could be used to predict future behaviors (van Maurik, 2001).

Stogdill (1948) continued this research using trait theory and utilized an extensive review of the literature to study the traits that that differentiated leaders from followers. Stogdill’s *Handbook of Leadership* (1974) explored the vast field of leaders and leadership, from his perspective as an industrial psychologist, as well as from sociological and political perspectives. He attempted to define the term leadership, proclaiming that “there are almost as many different definitions of leadership as there are persons who have attempted to define the concept” (Stogdill, p. 7).

Stogdill (1974) reported that leadership paradigms through the 1960s suggested that the leader is at the center of a group, intentionally or otherwise, and integrates the group needs and wishes (Stogdill). Other early scholars had a more authoritarian view of leadership that failed to recognize the role of the followers and the reciprocal relationship between the leader and the group (Stogdill, 1974). Stogdill’s research suggested leaders are made and not born, and possess specific leader qualities, including innate leadership
ability, personality attributes, and even physical qualities that foster one’s ability to lead others. Rather than focusing on the leader’s position within the group, Stogdill tried to identify unique personality traits of leaders that affected their ability to influence others (Stogdill). As a result, he identified a list of effective leadership traits that include adaptable, ambitious, assertive, decisive, dependable, dominant, energetic, and confident (Stogdill). Stogdill’s seminal work provided a comprehensive summary of the study of leadership as it stood after the first three-quarters of the twentieth century.

**Behavioral theory.** Evolving from the work of Harvard psychologist B.F. Skinner in the 1940s, another generation of leadership theories focused on the behaviors that leaders demonstrated, versus the innate attributes that leaders were born with (van Maurik, 2001). Behavioral theories of leadership proposed that leadership could be taught, and therefore not limited to just the “great man,” and that leaders could regulate their effectiveness by choosing the right behavior when leading others (van Maurik, 2001).

Tannenbaum and Schmidt (1958) identified a continuum of seven leadership behaviors that placed the amount of freedom a subordinate had in a particular situation at one end and the amount of authority the manager had at the opposite end of the continuum. The belief that the leader and the subordinate had options in how they could behave was a critical component of their theory of leadership.

In 1964, Blake and Moulton introduced their managerial grid, which had two intersecting axes representing concern for task/production and concern for people/relationship, which created four quadrants (the managerial grid). Using a scale of
1-9 representing low to high, managers could adjust their leadership behavior relative to their concern for people and concern for task depending upon the environment (Blake & Moulton, 1964). While they were not suggesting that there was one perfect leadership style, the belief that the leader and the subordinates had flexibility in their behavior, and that the leader should adjust their leadership style to best fit the situation was a hallmark of their research.

No one generation of leadership theory claims to be perfect in itself, nor has one study found the ideal answer for the ideal form of leadership. These schools of leadership theories served as the basis for other leadership research. For example, DePree (1989) felt the examination of effective leadership traits and behaviors was important, but he thought the study of leadership needed to move beyond an examination of the most effective leader behaviors and characteristics. He believed that “leaders should leave behind them assets and a legacy” (p. 13). The responsibility of a leader is greater than just leading an organization towards achieving their desired organizational goals. Leaders must also provide momentum, effectiveness, and “take a role in developing, expressing and defending civility and values” (p. 21). “Leaders owe the organization a new reference point for what caring, purposeful, committed people can be in the institutional setting” (p. 15). Given the challenges facing business organizations today, as well as those challenges brought on by an increasingly global community, leaders have a responsibility to seek a better understanding of the characteristics necessary for good leadership in order to become more effective leaders themselves.
Contingency theory. Stemming from the leadership trait and behavior theories was a belief that leadership style was fixed and innate (van Maurik, 2001). The Fiedler Contingency Model developed in the mid 1960s suggested that leadership effectiveness relies upon a combination of factors interacting with each other (Fiedler, 1964, 1967). The first factor, leader’s style, was based upon fixed personality traits. Situational favorableness however was variable and was impacted or the conditions of the environment (Fiedler, 1967). When the need for those dominant traits aligned with the environment or situation, the leader would be more effective. The environment or situation, is influenced by three factors, leader-member relations (level of trust and confidence the followers have in the leader), task structure (and the leader’s ability to complete the task) and position power (how much power the leader has over the group). The Fiedler’s Contingency Model influenced other leadership scholars to consider the impact that the situation and the environment had on leader effectiveness.

Situational leadership. Introduced initially in 1969 as the “Life cycle theory of leadership,” Hersey and Blanchard’s model of situational leadership also relied upon two factors for effective leader behavior; the leader’s style and the individual or group’s level of maturity (1969). This model suggested that the leader should flex their style of leadership according to both the task that needs to be accomplished and their relationship with the group (Hersey & Blanchard, 1969). They identified four primary behaviors that the leader should utilize, depending upon the situation, which include telling, selling, participating, and delegating (Hersey & Blanchard, 1969).
Gardner (1989) also studied the relationship between the leader and their environment. Gardner determined that there was a specific set of leadership characteristics that indicated that a leader in one situation could lead in another, which included physical vitality and stamina, intelligence and action-oriented judgment, eagerness to accept responsibility, task competence, understanding of followers and their needs, skill in dealing with people, need for achievement, capacity to motivate people, courage and resolution, trustworthiness, decisiveness, self-confidence, assertiveness, and adaptability/flexibility (Gardner).

**Transformational theory.** Another pioneering scholar of leadership studies was Burns, who introduced the concept of transformational leadership (Burns, 1978). According to Sashkin and Rosenbach (1993) Burns “has had the most influence on leadership research and history over the past fifteen years” (Sashkin & Rosenbach, p. 88). Burns believed that the distinctions between leaders and managers are significant and could not be ignored. The transformational leader “recognizes and exploits an existing need or demand of a potential follower... (and) looks for potential motives in followers, seeks to satisfy higher needs, and engages the full person of the follower” (Burns, 1978, p. 4). Unlike the “old” management approach where transactional leadership was used to get people to do something in order to receive something in return, the role of both leader and follower and the social system to which they belong are collectively transformed by transformational leadership (Burns).

The transformational leadership style that Burns speaks of is a process where leaders induce followers to act in a way that represents the values and motivations of both
the leaders and the followers (Burns, 1978). “The genius of leadership lies in the manner in which leaders see and act on their own and their followers’ values and motivations” (Burns, 1978, p. 19). Transformational leadership occurs “when one or more persons engage with others in such a way that leaders and followers raise one another to higher levels of motivation and morality” (p. 6). It is not only a reflection of the leader’s morality, but it raises the level of morality of both leaders and followers to new heights (Burns).

Bass, a student and protégé of Stodgill, updated Stodgill’s Handbook on Leadership in 1981 and then again in 1990, each time broadening the scope of the previous work and building upon the new leadership research. Bass (1981) included Burns’ concept of transformational leadership and developed a new leadership paradigm that demonstrates how the transformational leader is much more effective than the transactional leader. Bass believed that the transformational leader has a more significant responsibility, in that they must establish a vision for the future and be able to communicate that vision to others. A shared vision fosters greater commitment and effort towards achieving the organization’s goals (Bass, 1990).

By the time Bass published the third edition, women had assumed a more prominent role in the workforce yet still faced significant barriers in advancing to senior roles (Bass, 1990). Although nearly 51% of women over age 16 were working, most only reached first-level managerial positions (Bass). Men tended to stereotype women’s leadership abilities and exclude them from leadership activities. Stereotypes labeled women as “less competent and warmer emotionally than men” (p. 495) which
contradicted the prevailing belief of the time, which suggested that the skills required of an effective manager were stereotypically masculine behaviors like toughness and competence (Bass, 1990). However, Bass’s research on the literature on gender and leadership found that “no consistently clear pattern of differences can be discerned in the supervisory style of female as compared to male leaders” (Bass, 1981, p. 499).

Burns (1978) and Bass (1981) triggered an interest in transformational research among other notable scholars. Bennis and Nanus’ (1985) interest in transformational leadership led them to interview 90 CEO’s and public sector leaders in search for insights into exceptional leadership. They ultimately identified four key principles that every leader should master, which included focusing follower’s attention on a common vision, creating a sense of meaning through effective communication, building trust by positioning principles and values of mutual interest of the organization, and finally, by creating a strong sense of belief in oneself, which will encourage others to follow (Bennis & Nanus).

**Leadership and vision**

Bennis and Nanus (1985) wrote such “leadership is necessary to help organizations develop a new vision of what they can be, then mobilize the organization to change toward the new vision” (p. 12). They predicted that change will become even more inevitable in business organizations in the future and that leaders will face an increasing need to manage changing technology and the speed of change in organizations. The changing culture of the business environment will require more transformational leaders who can commit people to action, convert followers into leaders,
and convert leaders into agents of change (Bennis & Nanus). They urged the new, transformational leaders to reshape the organizational processes and better integrate change processes into the culture of business. Leaders must get all employees on the same side and pursuing the same vision, in order to reduce obstacles to change (Bennis & Nanus).

Shortly after Bennis and Nanus identified their key principles for good leadership in their classic study, Kouzes and Posner (1987) also conducted research on leadership as a relationship between leaders and followers. In this landmark study, they analyzed the personal best leadership experiences of managers and executives from both the public and private sectors, and identified five practices of exemplary leadership (Kouzes & Posner). They labeled these five practices modeling the way, inspiring a shared vision, challenging the process, enabling others to act, and encouraging the heart.

**Leadership and change**

Tichy and Devanna (1986) underscored the importance of the transformational leader in driving organizational change. As organizations face the changing demands of business, they are making significant, fundamental changes towards revitalizing the organization, efforts that require a new breed of leader (Tichy & Devanna). The leaders “define the need for change, create new visions, mobilize commitment to those visions, and ultimately transform and organization” (p. 4).

Kotter (1988, 1990) also emphasized the importance of the leader’s ability to lead change. He believed “most U.S. corporations today are overmanaged and underled” (1990, p. 103) and that change, by definition, requires leadership (Kotter, 1995). Most of
Kotter’s work focused change processes for leaders, rather than specific behaviors or practices required of leaders. He did recognize the importance of engaging senior-level leaders in the transformation. Without the inclusion of senior-level leaders in the guiding coalition of the transformational process, change efforts fail (Kotter, 1995).

**Leadership and charisma**

Conger and Kanungo (1987) also sought an understanding of the leadership behaviors demonstrated by good leaders consistently over time. They suggested that those leaders that served as exemplary change agents throughout history possessed a high level of charisma. Charismatic leaders have a power to convince others to follow their lead, sometimes for good and sometimes for evil (Conger & Kanungo). They developed a framework for observing charisma as a leader behavior, which lessened the mystique surrounding charisma. They suggest that organizations select managers who possess the behaviors relating to charisma, and develop those skills in their leaders (Conger & Kanungo).

**Gender and leadership**

Similar to the sequential but overlapping research and thought on leadership theories, the discussion of influence of gender on leadership has extended over decades, with each study and scholar adding to the conversation, with no definitive theory emerging (Adler, 2001; Eagly & Johnson, 1990; Fisher, 1999; Helgesen, 1990; Hewlett, 2004; Kanter, 1977; Kezar, 2000; Loden, 1985; Rosener, 1995; Schein, 1973). Traditionally, literature on leadership and gender has provided varying perspectives on the effectiveness of women leaders. In 1992, Moran wrote
Even though women have become an increasingly large proportion of the work force, they still do not hold a proportionate share of the top administrative positions. Most of the gender difference research has focused upon whether women’s comparative lack of success in attaining high positions could somehow be related to differences in their leadership style. (pp. 475-476)

In 2012, women still do not hold a proportionate share of senior level positions, nor do we have a clear understanding of the leadership behaviors that help women be most effective in these roles (Barsh & Lee, 2011; Evans, 2011; U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics, 2012).

**Similarities between male and female leaders.** Historically, most of what has been studied about leadership has been conducted about white men by white men (Marshall, 1995). The early scholars in the field of leadership studies were men like Stogdill, Burns, Bass and others. As women began to join the workforce in greater numbers, these researchers and others included gender as an element of their research. Some studies identified minimal or no differences in the leadership skills of men and women executives (Bartol, 1978; Bartol & Butterfield, 1976; Bass, 1981; Bass, 1990; Eagly & Johnson, 1990; Eagly & Karu, 1991; Fenn, 1978; Kanter, 1977; Payne, Fuqua & Canegami 1998; Powell, 1988; Powell & Butterfield 1994).

One of the first women scholars to seriously explore the role of women in the workplace was Kanter. Kanter first published her seminal work on women in the workplace, *Men and Women of the Corporation* in 1977. She explored the roles of men and women in the workplace and determined that power and the accumulation of power
was the key to establishing one’s position as a leader (Kanter, 1977). Recognizing the
cultural belief that men make better leaders than women, Kanter suggested that it is the
structure and context of the organization, especially the proportion of women within the
organization, that provided greater predictors of leadership behavior, not gender (Kanter).

Kanter's typology of proportionate diversity classified organizations based on
their relative balance of social types, including gender, and ranged from organizations
that have one dominate social type to those more balanced organizations in which the
minority social type in question constitutes at minimum of 40 percent of the workforce
(Kanter, 1977). In general, she found that the more proportionately balanced an
organization becomes in terms of gender, the fewer barriers and greater influence women
will have on the culture of that organization. Kanter said “there is as yet no research
evidence that makes a case for sex differences in either leadership aptitude or style” (p.
199). Kanter believed men and women leaders did not differ significantly in skills or
practices, but that cultural beliefs, the lack of proportionate representation in leadership
positions and subsequent lack of power within organizations, often lead to a preference
for male leaders.

Fenn (1978) found that men and women are inherently similar, yet are socialized
differently and those differences are sensationalized. She attributed many of the
stereotypical differences between men and women to be just that – stereotype. Contrary
to stereotype, her research found no evidence to suggest that women had an inborn focus
on people or that men had a greater focus on things (Fenn, 1978). These perceived
differences, suggested Fenn, were the result of socialization that occurs throughout one’s
lifetime, which makes women less prepared for the workforce than men. Girls experience playing as children provided less opportunity to function within the context of a team, as well as to emulate leader and follow roles (Fenn).

While she found no inherent differences based upon gender, she did suggest that the socialization process has prepared women differently than men for managerial positions. Women interact with one another in a more collaborative way, which develops skills and strengths that contribute to high levels of performance in the workplace (Fenn, 1978). “Organizations that recognize and utilize the strengths of both male and female managers and works will remain viable in today’s changing culture” (Fenn, 1978, p. 161).

Eagly and Johnson (1990) ascertained that previous social science research found no reliable differences in the ways that men and women demonstrate leadership and that there are no differences in leadership based solely on gender. Their research focused on organizational setting and men and women who were already occupying leadership positions and agreed that there were no discernable differences (Eagly & Johnson). However, in those studies that were conducted in laboratory environments or were assessment-based, and those studies that researched “the leadership styles of people not selected for occupancy of leadership roles” (Eagly & Johnson, p. 233), women were more likely to report “more democratic or participative style and a less autocratic or directive style than did men” (p. 233). They concluded that reported leadership styles were influenced by the environment in which they were studied as well as by whether the participants were presently occupying leadership positions. For those studies that were
conducted within the context of an organization, no differences were found in leadership styles between men and women leaders. “In contrast to the gender-stereotypic expectation that women lead in an *interpersonally oriented* style and men in a *task-oriented* style, female and male leaders did not differ in these two styles in organizational studies” (p. 233). Instead, Eagly and Johnson (1990) believed that organizations similarly socialize both males and females in managerial roles so that the stereotypical tendencies of both sexes are minimized.

Payne, Fuqua, and Canegami’s (1998) research suggested that women leaders behave in a similar manner as men. They believed that the traditional goal of leaders requires them to gain power and use it to accomplish their goals, be in control and direct others within the organization (Payne, Fuqua and Canegami, 1998). In order to do so, the leader demonstrates a task focus and a competitiveness that generally stems from hierarchical authority and not from their ability to “be liked” or to develop satisfying relationships, regardless of what their natural tendencies might be. They state that “high achieving women have often believed that their success depended on acting in ways which made them appear ‘more like a man’” (p. 146). While this approach may pay off in the short term when women are rewarded for their achievements, it has some drawbacks as well. “It may be that high achieving females have achieved, but paid the price interpersonally because they believed personal relationships might jeopardize their success” (p. 146).

Contrary to prior research suggesting that women and men lead differently, but that women can be stereotyped as less effective leaders than men and therefore may be
excluded from consideration for senior level positions, Bass, Avolio, and Atwater (1996) found no direct causal link to leadership effectiveness and gender. They administered an assessment of transactional and transformational leadership to three samples of leaders where they were rated by both male and female direct reports. They found that not only were there no differences in the effectiveness of several leadership behaviors based upon gender, but that women were seen to be more transformational than men on some behaviors (Bass, Avolio, & Atwater 1996).

Differences between male and female leaders. In the 1980s and 1990s, feminist authors began to challenge traditionally held assumptions and took a much bolder position on the role of professional women in organizations (Fisher, 1999; Helgesen, 1990; Loden, 1985; Rosener, 1990). These researchers extend the work of prominent leadership theorists by examining their findings from the perspective of women managers and executives, only to find seemingly different leadership styles.

Loden (1985) found that women possess more feminine leadership skills such as cooperativeness, collaboration, lower need for control, and problem solving based on intuition, empathy, and rationality. At the same time that leading scholars were further researching concepts like transformational leadership and participative leadership, Loden (1985) investigated how these leadership practices affected women managers and executives. Prior to her research, the advice often given to women managers and executives was to “behave like men” by becoming “more strategic, assertive, and competitive and less emotional and sensitive” (Loden, p. 10). She developed a feminine model of leadership that identifies practices not limited exclusively to women, but
demonstrated more frequently and to a greater degree by women. The feminine style of leadership utilizes a full range of talents and abilities and relies on both emotional and rational data (Loden). “Feminine leaders see the world through two different lenses concurrently and, as a result, respond to situations on both the thinking and the feeling levels” (Loden, p. 61). Characteristics of the feminine leadership style include lower control, higher empathetic and collaborative styles, high performance standards, an inclination towards team-based structures, intuitive/rational problem-solving styles, and a focus on quality output (Loden). Feminine leadership is not a replacement for traditional management practices, but an alternative. “Taken together, they represent a holistic approach to management – capable of taking full advantage of the entire spectrum of human talents” (Loden, p. 5).

Helgesen (1990) conducted a study of women leaders and found that men and women approach work in distinctly different ways. She found that the women she studied were creative, fostered cooperation, and demonstrated intuitive decision-making skills necessary for successful organizations in the 21st century (Helgesen). The women that she studied led organizations that are not traditional, hierarchical structures. Instead of sitting at the top of their organizational hierarchies, the women she studied viewed themselves in the middle of what Helgesen refers to as a “web” (p. 49). The web-based organization is structured much differently than the traditional pyramid-based, organizational hierarchy.

These contrasting organizational structures each provide different chains of commands, means of communications and formal and informal connections to other parts
of the organization (Helgesen, 1990). The women Helgesen studied preferred to be in the center of the organizational web, rather than at the top of the organizational hierarchy. The advantage to this different approach, she says, is that “the female view that one strengthens oneself by strengthening others is finding greater acceptance, and female values of inclusion and connection are emerging as valuable leadership qualities” (p. 233). Helgesen (1990) suggested that “the female view that one strengthens oneself by strengthening others is finding greater acceptance, and female values of inclusion and connection are emerging as valuable leadership qualities” (p. 233).

Rosener authored another notable study on gender similarities and differences that appeared in the *Harvard Business Review* in 1990 entitled “Ways Women Lead.” She administered an 8-page survey to women who were members of an organization of prominent women leaders, as well as their male colleagues. In reporting her findings, Rosener suggested that women managers lead differently than their male colleagues. Rather than mimicking the command-and-control style of leadership generally associated with men in corporate settings, women managers demonstrate their own unique leadership style (Rosener, 1990). The male leaders that Rosener studied were more likely to describe themselves as “transactional” leaders who engaged in a series of interactions with subordinates in exchange for work performance and use formal authority and power generated from their position in the organization (Rosener). Women leaders described their ability to generate work performance from others as a result of more “transformational” leadership qualities. That is, women leaders demonstrated a style
focused on “getting subordinates to transform their own self-interest into the interest of
the group through concern for a broader goal” (p. 150).

Rosener referred to women’s leadership style as “interactive leadership” (1990),
which is characterized by encouraging participation, sharing power and information,
enhancing other people’s self-work, and getting others excited about their work. She
warned against linking interactive leadership or transformational leadership directly to
being female however, as women can demonstrate transactional leadership styles and
men can be transformational leaders (Rosener). Instead, she encouraged organizations to
redefine and broaden their interpretation of effective leadership and value the strength
and flexibility that the interactive leadership style can provide for men and women and
the organizations (Rosener).

In 1995, Rosener expanded upon her earlier study and determined that leveraging
the talents of professional women can “lead to more innovative, productive and profitable
organizations” (p. 3). She continued to challenge the one-best model for leadership,
arguing that while many organizations support the traditionally masculine command-and-
control style as the one-best style of leadership, the most effective organizations
understand that there is no one-best style of leadership (1995). Instead, command-and-
control and the interactive leadership style that she encouraged in her previous work are
two leadership styles, of many, that can help an organization compete in the current
changing business environment (Rosener).

Like Helgesen, Rosener (1995) found that women bring a set of talents to
management roles that are crucial skills for the organization, including “their comfort
with sharing power and information, their ability to motivate in nontraditional ways, and their apparent ease in responding to change” (p. 148). Professional women are often undervalued, underrepresented, and underutilized because their leadership competence differs from the one-best leadership model (Rosener, 1995). Rosener emphasized that women managers are not superior to their male counterparts, but that they are not inferior either: just different. She explained, “the differences women bring to the workplace constitute an economic resource – an added value … Women tend to feel comfortable with ambiguity, to be inclusive rather than exclusive, and to evaluate performance in both qualitative and quantitative terms” (p. 201). She argued that the inclusion of women in the leadership ranks brings high morale, increased productivity, and greater innovation to the organization (Rosener).

Fisher (1999) researched these differences from a biological perspective and found real differences between men and women. While men and women possess an elaborate mix of leadership traits, that vary from individual to individual, she discovered that there are some talents that women express more regularly than men (Fisher, 2005a). On average, women think differently, have greater mental flexibility, are more verbally articulate, possess greater “executive social skills” and are more skilled at networking, collaborating and displaying empathy (Fisher). Women are more adept at web thinking, where they integrate details and arrange data. Men are better, on average, than women at compartmentalizing and analyzing information in a linear, causal path and possess the spatial and engineering skills our society needs in the current “high tech” era (Fisher, 2005a). Women can collect information, integrate the data into complex patterns, and
generate more options and possibilities (Fisher, 2005b). “Web thinking, mental flexibility, the ability to embrace ambiguity, intuition, imagination, a penchant for long-term planning, verbal acuity, executive social skills, the capacity to collaborate, and empathy are all essential leadership traits in the new global economy” (p. 138). Fisher identifies differences between genders without suggesting that one is better than the other. “Men and women are like two feet – they need each other to get ahead. Nevertheless, the world is changing in ways that can profit from women’s skills as well as those of men” (p. 139).

In a study of leadership in higher education, Kezar (2000) reported that women interpret leadership very differently from men. Leadership has traditionally been studied from a masculine perspective of power and authority and provided lists of traits, behaviors, and influence strategies generated from samples of white men, because that is who held leadership positions or were in power (Kezar). Kezar argues that organizations, particularly institutions of higher education, will struggle under this limited view of leadership as it reduces the inclusion of diverse populations, including women, who tend to prefer a collective, collaborative approach to leadership rather than individualistic (Kezar). Women leaders demonstrate a more participative, relationship and interpersonal style of leadership (Kezar). Gender plays an important role on leadership styles and perceptions in areas such as ability to help, cope and care for subordinates and for the organization, which are important to the future of the organization

Meyerson (2001) reported that women leaders were different not necessarily because of their gender, but because their marginalized status in the organization. In her
discussion of “tempered radicals,” Meyerson (2001) included women in business with others who are “misaligned with the dominant culture because their social identities – race, gender, sexual orientation, age, for example – or their values and beliefs mark them as different from the organizational majority” (p. 396). This moniker is not used exclusively to represent women, as men and women who are organizational insiders (and contribute and succeed in their jobs) but treated as outsiders because they represent something other than the dominant culture, are included in her definition of tempered radicals (Meyerson, 2001). These people face enormous pressures to conform to the organizational culture and yet define themselves by finding a middle ground and navigating that terrain successfully (Meyerson, 2001). While Meyerson spent much time researching and understanding these marginalized workers, perhaps her most important discovery about their secret to success is that there is none. “There is no single formula for finding a successful course. Rather, tempered radicals draw on a variety of strategies to put their ideals into practice.” (p. 397).

Gergen (2005) believed that not only do women make great leaders, but that “women seem ideally suited to the new leadership style that has been widely embraced” (p. xix). Rather than the old style of top-down, command and control, and directional leadership, the new approach to leadership relies upon influence to persuade, empower, collaborate, and partner with others (Gergen, 2005, p. xix). Whereas the old style of leadership was represented by a pyramid, with the leader at the top, the new style of leadership is a series of concentric and overlapping circles, with the leader on the inside, where they must first know themselves and achieve self-mastery (Gergen). The second
circle surrounds the first and includes the organization that the leader is a part of. “After learning self-leadership, one must learn to lead this larger group” by developing the social skills and empathy needed to persuade others to work towards accomplishing a shared goal (Gergen). The third concentric circle surrounds the first two and includes those other organizations that the leader must cooperate, coordinate and partner with, in order to become a successful leader (Gergen). Gergen argues that women leaders “seem perfectly tailored for this new style” (p. xxi). The new preferred leadership style embraces qualities that are traditionally “feminine” such as consensual, relational, web-based, caring, inclusive, open and transparent personal styles (Gergen). The most effective leaders in the current leadership environment are also able to mix masculine qualities, like decisiveness, aggressiveness and autocratic, with feminine qualities and “integrate them into a balanced whole” (p. xxii)

**Narrowing the gap.** Although some research found that men and women behaved similarly as leaders (Bass, 1981; Eagly & Johnson, 1990; Fenn, 1978; Payne, Fuqua, & Canegami, 1998) and others discovered differences (Fisher, 1999; Helgesen, 1990; Meyerson, 2001; Rosener, 1995), a third body of literature indicates that a balance of the stereotypically masculine and feminine characteristics (sometimes called an androgynous leadership style) can be most effective and that men and women both adapt to the best of the other gender to create this style (Sargent, 1981). Furthermore, a broader acceptance of the androgynous leadership style may not only be preferred, but it may provide an opportunity for women to overcome the stereotypes that have hindered their progress in the past (Kent & Moss, 1994).
Schein (1989) recognized that male and female leaders may be different, but warned organizations against the dangers of stereotyping men as “masculine” leaders and women as “feminine” leaders. Many have touted the value of the androgynous leader, where the best of the masculine leadership qualities and the best of the feminine leadership qualities are melded to create the ideal leader (Schein). Yet, Schein warns against the idealizing of the feminine leader oriented toward cooperation, teamwork and concern for others as a lever to enhancing opportunities for women in leadership. “The androgynous orientation builds a managerial access bridge for women on a shaky foundation of sand” (Schein, p. 162). Schein recognized the research that identified differences between male and female leaders, yet suggested that the differences between genders are much fewer than most commonly believe. When differences such as background, experience and others are considered, there are actually more differences in leadership styles within gender, than between the leadership styles between men and women (Schein).

At the executive level, men and women are that much more likely to be virtually identical. Schein encouraged organizations to stop focusing on the differences between gender and leadership and instead incorporate the organizational structures and support that alleviate the division between family and work. Such an environment would “foster an organizational climate receptive to and supportive of qualified and hard-working women and men” (Schein, 1989, p. 166). The equalizing of these structures that divide men and women would help erase the differences between the sexes, provide
opportunities for the most qualified men and women, and improve the quality of leadership overall.

Women in business

While it is important to continue research on leadership and gender in order to build an understanding of effective leadership practices for both men and women leaders, there is also a body of research that suggested organizations with high representation of women in senior-level positions are more effective (Adler 2001; Catalyst, 2004; Cook & Glass, 2001). Both Adler (2001) and Catalyst (2004) found that companies with the highest percentages of female executives outperformed their industry averages. Cook and Glass (2001) found that the announcement of the promotion of a woman into a management role has a favorable impact on corporation’s stock prices. As U.S. corporations continue to face pressures from the global business environment, organizations must search for new ways to improve performance (Caudron, 1999). For these reasons, and others, it remains important to pursue a greater understanding of research the similarities and differences in the leadership practices of both men and women executives, as well as the leadership styles that contribute to women’s success in executive level roles.

The question then remains unanswered as to whether men and women business leaders share similar or different leadership styles, as well as what specific leadership skills are most effective in the current business environment. The answers available are as unclear and uncertain as the current business environment itself and yet are critical to

In 2011, women made up 46.6% of the total U.S. labor force, with 58.1% of women over 16 either employed or seeking employment (U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics, 2012). According to Catalyst (2011), 51.5% of these women in the workforce hold management, professional or related occupations. Yet, despite a Catalyst (2004) study that found an equal level of interest in the CEO job among women and men executives in the Fortune 500, only 14.1% of the Fortune 500 corporate office positions were held by women (Catalyst, 2011). This is a decrease from the 15.7% who were women in Fortune 500 corporate office positions in 2002 (Catalyst, 2002). In both 2010 and 2011, more than one-quarter of the Fortune 500 had no women in corporate officer roles, and less than 20% had women in one-quarter or more of their corporate officer roles (Catalyst, 2011).

In the summer of 2012, the appointment of Marissa Mayer as CEO of Yahoo! made headlines, not only because she was one of only 20 female CEO’s in the Fortune 500 but also because she was the first ever pregnant CEO among those ranks (Keyishian, 2012). The fact that the headlines highlighted her pregnancy instead of her leadership abilities or track record of success was unfortunate, especially given the link between women’s executive leadership to organizational results and performance (Catalyst, 2004). In a 2004 study, Catalyst examined gender diversity in the executive ranks and the financial performance of 353 U.S. companies. There study found that the group of companies with the highest percentages of women on their senior leadership teams
outperformed the group with the lowest percentage of women in senior officer positions. “The companies that have diversity and manage it properly make better decisions, produce better products, and retain several key business advantages over more homogeneous companies.” (Catalyst, 2004, p. 3). Consequently, some scholars continue to suggest that the advancement and retention of women in executive roles is more than just a matter of equity. It is simply good business (Adler, 2001; Catalyst, 2004; Catalyst, 2011; Fisher, 2005b).

What accounts for this relatively low percentage of women among the executive ranks? Over the last decade, media reports have argued that women do not want the pressures or stress of these top jobs or suggest that women executives choose on their own to “opt out” of the corporate executive ranks (Belkin, 2003; Hewlett, 2003; Kantor, 2012; Merrill-Sands, Kickul, & Ingols, 2005; Slaughter, 2012; Tischler, 2004). Yet, the data suggest the opposite. A McKinsey & Company 2011 study found that women aren’t opting-out of leadership roles after all. Despite an equal level of interest in advancing into the top jobs, women are likely to stay put because of a lack of informal mentors, exclusion from informal networks, and a lack of sponsor or champion in the senior ranks to help them advance. (Barsh & Lee, 2011). More than men, women were likely to stay in their current roles if they found a deep sense of meaning in their work, were making a difference, and were connected with their colleagues (Barsh & Lee, 2011).

The war for talent

Caudron (1999) found that that “one-fifth of this country’s large, established companies will be losing 40 percent or more of their top-level talent in the next five years
as senior executives reach retirement age” (p. 72). Bardoel, Tepe and Moss (2003) warned organizations to take note of the changing demographics of the U.S. labor force and the impact those changes will have on the workplace. As technology, globalization, even a tough economy impact the top jobs in the workforce, the workers themselves are changing as well. “Employees are now much more likely to be female than they were even 10 years ago as more women participate in the paid workforce” (Bardoel, Tepe & Moss, 2003, p. 1).

The business environment has been changing so dramatically and so quickly over the past decade, that even well-established companies face the looming leadership crisis. The best strategy to address this crisis is to identify the internal leadership talent needed for key positions, particularly for executive level roles, and begin to develop those leaders immediately (Caudron, 1999). The argument for more women in corporate executive roles clearly goes beyond equity. Catalyst (2005) warned employers to identify and develop a broader, more diverse group of leaders if they want to remain competitive and prepare for the future. “Since leadership talent is critical and scarce, organizations cannot afford to underutilize any segment of the talent pool” (Catalyst, 2005, p. 1). Also, as noted, more diverse companies achieve better financial results (Catalyst, 2004).

Given the divergent findings in the literature about the leadership skills of both men and women business executives, and the changing demographics of the workforce, a greater understanding of the relationship among gender, leadership, and the demands of the current business environment is needed. Facing a looming leadership crisis, a further exploration of the leadership skills necessary to advance and retain women and men in
senior leadership positions and the leadership challenges facing organizations is warranted.

The business environment is ever-changing. While some researchers identified similar styles of leadership practices for men and women leaders (Bass, 1981; Kanter, 1977; Schein, 1989), several other authors report very different styles between male and female leaders that they attribute to gender (Adler & Izraeli, 1988; Helgesen, 1990; Rosener, 1990). There is yet to be consensus established as to whether male and female leaders are the same or different, or even as to what style of leadership is most effective (Bass, 1981; Eagly & Johnson, 1990; Helgesen, 1990; Kanter, 1977; Loden, 1985; Rosener, 1990). Many early studies assumed that the leadership skills demonstrated in male-dominated bureaucratic and hierarchical structures of organizations were best, an assumption rarely challenged in the literature (Marshall, 1995).

Adler and Izraeli (1988) refer to the two different models for women in management as the equity model (similarities) and the complementary contribution model (differences) (p. 5). The equity model assumes that women are identical to men and equally capable as men to serve as managers and leaders, but are hindered by access and opportunity (Adler & Izraeli). The complementary contribution model is more pervasive throughout Europe than the U.S and therefore important for U.S. businesses to tune into as the environment becomes more global. This approach assumes that men and women are different and therefore make distinct but equally valuable contributions to business (Adler & Izraeli).
The new leadership paradigm

Full acceptance of both the similarities and differences of men and women as leaders requires a shift in the structure and culture of organizations (Loden, 1985). Kuhn (1962) first addressed the concept of paradigms in reference to history and philosophy of science and the scientific research community. He focused on the concepts and facts that were available at a particular time, and explained that the development of new theories does not come strictly from the addition of new facts to old facts (Kuhn). The current paradigm is the existing knowledge base that serves as a foundation for new knowledge to be generated. Paradigms are essential to any body of knowledge, or organizational structures, as "no natural history can be interpreted in the absence of at least some implicit body of intertwined theoretical and methodological belief that permits selection, evaluation, and criticism" (Kuhn, p. 16-17). Because the experts share a commitment to the same knowledge basis which is the foundation of the existing knowledge base, they believe that any unanswered questions will ultimately be resolved within the existing paradigms (Kuhn).

Even the experts don’t know what they don’t know, at that time. The paradigm bounds the knowledge of the discipline which gives the experts their status as experts (Kuhn, 1962). “A paradigm transforms a group into a profession or, at least, a discipline” (Kuhn, p. 19). It is not until multiple anomalies occur that blur the paradigm that the experts begin to re-evaluate the existing paradigm (Kuhn). Kuhn believed that the transition from one paradigm to another does not take place without a “revolution” (Kuhn, p. 12). “Crisis is the essential tension implicit in scientific research” (Kuhn, p.
Such crises cause the experts to reconstruct the fundamentals of their discipline and replace the foundation with a new paradigm that resolves the crises (Kuhn). Given that the literature on leadership has begun to see repetitive anomalies that the experts refer to as crises, Kuhn’s discussion of paradigms seems especially relevant to the discussion of leadership.

Burns (1978) believed there was a need for greater transformational leadership and suggested a change in the leadership paradigm. In regards to the study of leadership, he believed that the knowledge base was extensive, but the field lacked a unified foundation of knowledge accepted by the leadership scholars (Burns). Such a foundation is characteristic to a paradigm (Kuhn, 1962). Burns thought that the leadership scholars were each focused on understanding leadership within the context of their own individual disciplines, such as human psychology, politics, or sociology, and that a shared knowledge base on leadership would significantly advance their understanding of the subject. In essence, the foundation would provide the boundaries on the subject, which Kuhn believed also characterized a paradigm.

Bass (1985, 1997) furthered the development of leadership paradigms by labeling Burn’s transformational leadership model the prevailing leadership paradigm. He wrote the following:

The transactional - transformational paradigm views leadership as either a matter of contingent reinforcement of followers by a transactional leader or the moving of followers beyond their self-interests for the good of the group, organization, or society by a transformational leader. (p. 130)
He credited Burns with the development of the transformational leadership paradigm that was still the foundation for leadership studies nearly 20 years later (Bass, 1997). Clearly, even the experts assumed that the current framework of leadership knowledge was the preeminent leadership paradigm.

Sashkin and Rosenbach (1991) also believed “a paradigm shift has indeed occurred over the past decades with respect to leadership research, theory and practice” (p. 38). By their definition, a paradigm is a “way of thinking, a frame of reference” (Sashkin & Rosenbach, p. 35). Although they suggested transactional leadership is still the primary style of leadership, the shift towards transformational leadership way underway. “The existing paradigm … is based upon the notion of transactions or exchanges” (Sashkin & Rosenbach, p. 36). They remind readers that paradigm shifts occur only when there is a major change in scientific knowledge. These authors believed that they were in the midst of a paradigm shift from transactional to transformational leadership (Sashkin & Rosenbach).

Rost (1991) argued that the leadership theories of today are based on the industrial paradigm of the 1930s. While several leadership theories have emerged since that time, there has been nothing revolutionary about those theories. They are all based on the same paradigm, rendering them essentially the same (Rost, 1991). He claimed that most leadership researchers have focused on leadership styles “since they can be quantified and objectified” (Rost, p. 35), which in turn pleases the practitioners, because the data can be used enhance leaders’ abilities. “These rituals give the impression that both the researchers and the practitioners are making progress in understanding and
engaging in leadership” (Rost, p. 35). He hopes that more researchers and practitioners become dissatisfied with the results of the current leadership literature that it triggers a transformation in leadership studies, which could result in the creation of a new leadership paradigm (Rost). New questions must be asked about leaders and leadership by reflective-practitioners for the paradigm shift to take place. He suggested that leadership development practitioners must become leadership scholars as well (Rost).

In 1992, Sims and Lorenzi identified a new leadership paradigm to be established in response to the global issues affecting business challenges in the 21st century. According to these authors, leadership is the act of influencing others (Sims & Lorenzi, 1992). They identified several management styles that managers could mimic and use effectively to influence employee behavior. With older leadership paradigms used in the past, managers could behave like The Strong Man, where they dictated and directed employees with the assumption that the manager knows best. The Transactor manager solicited performance from the employees through a series of “carrot-and-stick” exchanges (p. 293). The employee exchanged labor and knowledge with the manager’s recognition and reward. The Visionary Hero motivated employee performance by providing inspiration and vision and inducing others to buy into that vision. All of these management styles were top-down types of leadership. Sims and Lorenzi’s (1992) new paradigm of leadership relies upon the SuperLeader to lead others to lead themselves. This paradigm is based upon self-management, or the ability of individuals to manage themselves with initiative, creativity and self-responsibility. “SuperLeadership is the new leadership paradigm” (p. 295).
Thirty years after the initial research on the leadership practices of women business leaders, questions still remain regarding the similarities and differences between men and women, as well as a clear understanding of the leadership behaviors that women executives believe contribute to their success in executive roles. This research examined just that, and provides solid research to inform the field of executive education and its student population, business leaders and corporations.
CHAPTER III

METHODOLOGY

Given the limited number of women in senior executive roles, even still today, this study aimed to increase the understanding of the similarities and differences of leadership behaviors of executive women and executive men, and to better pinpoint the leadership behaviors women executives identified as being important to success in executive level positions. In order to generate the data needed to answer the research questions, mixed methods were utilized.

Quantitative and qualitative research methods are often viewed as being polar opposites (Newman & Benz, 1998). Quantitative research is thought of as theory testing, while qualitative is considered to be theory building (Newman & Benz). Other researchers believe that quantitative and qualitative research can be combined successfully, even in the same study (Strauss & Corbin, 1990). Newman and Benz suggest an alternative: “Neither the qualitative research philosophy nor the quantitative research philosophy encompasses the whole of research. Both are needed to conceptualize research holistically… This is the premise of the interactive continuum” (p. 20). Theory is developed neither at the beginning nor at the end. The interactive continuum is an overlapping, circular model with feedback loops that enables the researcher to continually revise theory throughout the research and improve the overall
quality of research (Newman & Benz). The mixed methodology research design of this study combines both quantitative and qualitative research methods, integrating elements of the Newman and Benz interactive continuum.

Addressed in this chapter are two subsections which align with the two research questions and the two methodologies. For research question #1, which utilizes an analysis of variance of quantitative data, the setting, procedure, instrument, participants, and data analysis are identified. This is followed by research question #2, which uses grounded theory, a qualitative research method. As with the first question, this chapter outlines the setting, procedure, instrument, participants and data analysis.

**Research question #1**

Research question one, Are there significant differences in the leadership behaviors of executive women and executive men, was investigated by administering a Leadership Practices Inventory (LPI) assessment and demographic questionnaire to a sample of both women and men in executive roles. An analysis of the data provided a baseline of similarities and differences between the leadership behaviors of men and women executives based on the current environment.

**Setting.** The population studied in this research included male and female business executives, from small, medium and large organizations, located in a medium-sized, Midwestern metropolitan area in the United States. For the purposes of this study, an executive was defined as someone who is a director, vice-president or above in an organization, or is a manager of managers. This ensured that individuals with similar levels of responsibilities were evaluated in this study.
This researcher is a woman with executive level experience, who is employed as a
director of executive education at a private, religiously-affiliated university. The
university is more than 160 years old and maintains a well-respected reputation in the
community, both as an educational institution and as a community leader. In the role of
executive education director, the researcher’s responsibilities include the management of
all aspects of the leadership and executive development programs, including curriculum
design, leadership development subject-expertise, and advising and coaching executives
from various companies. The executive education program offers leadership and
business skill development programs on topics such as influencing and negotiating,
strategy development and execution, leadership effectiveness, organizational culture, and
others.

The university executive education program staff maintained a database of more
than 1800 executives, managers and professionals from more than 40 small, medium and
large organizations in its region. The database included professionals who attended
executive education programs at the university between 2005-2008, as well as other
executives who have not attended but have been added to this database by their
company’s human resource or organizational development professionals or at their own
request.

Procedure. In December 2007, 1893 individuals from 43 different organizations
were sent an email, requesting participation in a research study and highlighting the
importance of this research in better understanding the leadership practices of the
regional business community (see Appendix A). The email was sent jointly under the
name of the CEO of a regional economic development organization, and a well known retired CEO, who was also a volunteer executive director of executive education in a university business school. Participants were asked to complete an online survey that included two parts; the 30 question Leadership Practices Inventory assessment (Posner & Kouzes, 1987) and a brief demographic questionnaire. Two reminder emails were sent out in early and mid January (Appendix B).

Participants in both aspects of this study were assured of their anonymity in this study and were required to indicate their consent in order to participate, per the university’s Institutional Review Board policy (Appendix C). They were assured of confidentiality in responses and were told that participation in the study is voluntary and that they were not going to be compensated for their participation.

**Instrument.** The quantitative data used to answer research question #1 was generated through the use of the Leadership Practices Inventory (Posner & Kouzes, 1987) assessment and a demographic questionnaire. The LPI instrument and the demographic questions asked via the online survey can be found in Appendix D and Appendix E.

**Leadership Practices Inventory.** The Leadership Practices Inventory (LPI) was first developed by Kouzes and Posner in 1987 and has been administered to over 350,000 managers and non-managers representing a multitude of demographics and organizations (Kouzes & Posner, 2002b). The LPI instrument is based upon The Leadership Challenge model of five practices of exemplary leadership, including

- Modeling the Way
- Inspiring a Shared Vision
• Challenging the Process
• Enabling Others to Act
• Encouraging the Heart

The LPI includes 6 statements for each of the 5 practices, or 30 statements total, which describe various leadership actions and behaviors (Kouzes & Posner, 2002b). The ten-point Likert scale measures the frequency of a particular leader behavior. The scale is as follows: (1) Almost never do what is described in the statement; (2) Rarely; (3) Seldom; (4) Once in a while; (5) Occasionally; (6) Sometimes; (7) Fairly Often; (8) Usually; (9) Very Frequently; and (10) Almost always do what is described in the statement.

The LPI instrument “was developed through a triangulation of qualitative and quantitative research methods and studies. In-depth interviews and written case studies from personal-best leadership experiences generated the conceptual framework” (Kouzes & Posner, 2002b). Fifteen years worth of validation studies “consistently confirm the reliability and validity of the Leadership Practices Inventory and the Five Practices of Exemplary Leaders model” (Kouzes & Posner, 2002b).

The scores on the LPI reflect the participant’s perceptions of the frequency of use of these leadership behaviors. “It does not evaluate your IQ, leadership style, management skill or personality” (Kouzes & Posner, 2006, p. 14). However, frequent use of the 30 leadership behaviors are directly linked to the future success of a leader-manager (Kouzes & Posner, 1987). The authors research has shown that higher scores on the LPI are indicative that others “feel significantly more satisfied with your practices
and strategies, more committed, and more powerful and influential” (Kouzes & Posner, 2006, p. 15). Kouzes and Posner (2006) also found that

the higher the leaders scores on the LPI, the more often others think you:

- have a high degree of personal credibility
- are effective in meeting job-related demands
- are able to increase motivation levels
- are successful in representing your group to upper management
- have a high performance team
- foster loyalty and commitment
- reduce absenteeism and turnover and reduce stress levels

Kouzes and Posner also found that for those leader-managers who report a high frequency of use of the 30 leadership behaviors, their constituents report more “pride in their workplace, team spirit, productivity, trust in management, and clarity about their responsibilities” (Houchin, personal correspondence, May 1, 2012). “Leaders who use the five practices more frequently achieve better results than leaders who engage less frequently” (Houchin, personal correspondence, May 1, 2012). Therefore, the frequency of use of the leadership behaviors reported by the participants is important data as it is an indicator of future success (Kouzes & Posner, 2007).

Reliability. Data on reliability for the LPI consistently produces Cronbach alpha coefficients of .75 to .87, above the acceptable level of .70 for reliability and does so consistently over time (Kouzes & Posner, 2002b; Nunnaly, 1978). Other studies have found similar results (Bauer, 1993; Mactavish, 1993; Ottinger, 1990). In a study of
women executives in banking and higher education, reliability on the LPI subscales ranged from .71 to .82 (Ottinger, 1990). Evidence also finds that the LPI has excellent face validity and measures what it is supposed to be measuring (Kouzes & Posner). The items within each of the five factors correspond more within their factor that they do with other factors. Analysis of different subsamples provides similar results to factor analysis of the whole sample (Kouzes & Posner).

Validity. The authors report that the LPI has good measures of content validity, construct validity, and discriminant validity. According to Kouzes and Posner (2002b), Our own studies, along with those of other researchers, and comparisons with other leadership instruments, have all shown the LPI to be quite powerful in assessing individual’s leadership capabilities, and demonstrating that the five practices of exemplary leaders do make a difference at the personal, interpersonal, small group, and organizational level. The LPI has proven quite robust in assessing individuals’ leadership behaviors and in providing feedback useful for developing and enhancing leadership capabilities. Overall, the five practices of exemplary leadership framework and the LPI contribute richly to our understanding of the leadership process and in the developing and unleashing of leadership capabilities. (pp. 18-19)

Related research using the Leadership Practices Inventory. More than 150 doctoral dissertations and research projects have used this instrument (Kouzes & Posner, 2002a). While none examine specifically the leadership practices of executive women and executive men, some research studied similar groups of individuals. In 1990, Tarazi
surveyed a small sample (n=73, 32 men and 41 women) of managers from five Southern California companies. He found no significant differences in the leadership practices of males and female managers. The small sample size must be taken into consideration when interpreting these results. “When you have a study where the group size is small (e.g. n=20), then you need to be aware of the possibility that a non-significant result may be due to insufficient power” (Pallant, 2005, p. 199). Power is the “probability that a statistical test will detect a true relationship and allow the rejection of a false null hypothesis” (Heiman, 2003, p. 519). Similarly, in a study between male and female managers in a large government agency, Kahl (1999) (n=80) found no significant differences on the LPI.

Masneri (1996) compared the LPI results from executives in not-for profit agencies and for-profit businesses (n=114), and did not find any significant differences between the two groups on four of the five leadership practices. Non-profit administrators scored significantly higher on Encouraging the Heart than did their colleagues in the for-profit sector. Kaewaram (1998) studied female and male managers from Thailand, and found no significant differences by gender on Challenging the Process, and Encouraging the Heart. The male managers did report higher scores than the females on Inspiring a Shared Vision, Enabling Others to Act, and Modeling the Way (Kaewaram, 1998).

Ottinger (1990) used the LPI to compare the leadership practices of women executives in higher education and banking. The sample size (n=221 higher education, n=136 banking) was larger than those used in the other studies mentioned previously.
Ottinger found that women in higher education engaged more frequently in the leadership practices of Challenging the Process, Inspiring a Shared Vision, Enabling Others to Act, and Encouraging the Heart. The results did not significantly vary based upon their marital status, length of work experience, or number of children.

**Demographic information.** The second part of the online survey utilized in this research featured a brief demographic questionnaire. Participants were asked to respond to four demographic questions, which asked for their gender, years of professional experience, their rank in their organization (manager, director, vice president, etc.) and the type of organization that they worked for (corporate, non-profit, manufacturing, health care, government, education or other). Before submitting their responses, participants also had the opportunity to volunteer to participate in a follow-up interview and provide the email address of a friend or colleague that might participate in the study. In early 2008, an additional 30 individuals whose names were provided by others were emailed the assessment as well, for a total of 1923 email invitations sent.

**Participants.** The survey sample was a non-probability, purposive sample. Any kind of sampling method that does not involve random sampling from the population at some time during the selection process has some inherent threats to generalizability to the population (Krathwohl, 1998). Participants in the study represented 40 organizations from diverse industries including aerospace, education, defense, finance, government, health care, insurance, manufacturing, non-for-profit, and professional services. The researcher used experience and informed judgment to determine that the sample was representative of the broader business population of that region (Krathwohl, 1998).
Based upon reported gender gaps in those at executive levels, one could anticipate a smaller proportion of women in the sample than men. Therefore, it was important to have a larger sample, because the larger the sample size, the greater the ability to generalize the findings to a broader population and to discover any gender effects that might exist (Krathwohl, 1998). Increasing the sample size can increase the power of a statistical test which helps to ensure that positive results aren’t missed (Krathwohl, 1998). Larger participation could increase the study’s power and its ability to avoid making a Type II error, where statistically significant results are missed due to chance error (Krathwohl).

**Data analysis.** Once the LPI survey data and demographic information from all respondents were collected, they were entered into a SPSS database and analyzed using both descriptive and inferential statistics. First, the demographic information was analyzed using descriptive statistics. Because this study focuses on the leadership behaviors of those at the executive level, the responses from those indicating their organizational rank as individual contributor or equivalent, first-level supervisor or equivalent or middle manager or equivalent were removed. Additional analysis was then conducted on the reduced sample data. This is further explained in chapter four.

Research questions #1 sought to understand if there significant differences in the leadership behaviors of executive women and executive men. By separating the responses by gender, the male and female group responses were compared. The data were then analyzed, using a one-way, between groups, analysis of variance (ANOVA), to determine whether or not there are statistically significant differences (\( \alpha = .05 \)) in the
frequency of leadership behaviors reported by female and male executives for each of the 30 individual leadership behaviors, as well as for the 5 practices of exemplary leadership.

The results are discussed in greater detail in chapter four. The intention was to generate new information about the leadership behaviors of those serving in executive roles in organizations today, and answer research question #1 Are there significant differences in the leadership behaviors of executive women and executive men?

**Research question #2**

In addition to learning more whether there are significant differences between executive women and executive men, this study also sought to better understand which leadership behaviors women executives believed were most important to their success in executive level positions. Research question #2 asked What leadership skills must women possess in order to be successful in executive level roles. The use of grounded theory in this portion of the study allowed the understanding to emerge from the experiences of men and women interviewed. In order to understand the research method of this aspect of this research, it is important to consider the foundation of grounded theory research.

**Grounded theory.** Grounded theory allows for understanding and substantive theory to gradually emerge from the data (Glaser & Strauss, 1967; Krathwohl, 1998; Merriam, 2002; Strauss & Corbin, 1990). It is theory building rather than theory testing (Newman & Benz, 1998). Other studies have been conducted on the similarities and differences in leadership styles of men and women executives with no definitive theory resulting (Bass, 1981; Eagly & Johnson, 1990; Helgesen, 1990; Loden, 1985; Rosener,
Glaser and Strauss point out that the culture of scientific research generally prefers quantitative studies that verify existing theories, over qualitative studies that look to generate new theories (1967). According to Glaser & Strauss (1967), with research that seeks to validate theory, “there is no provision for discovering novelty and potentially illuminating perspectives, that do emerge and might change the theory” (p. 40).

Grounded theory research uses the constant comparative method of data analysis as its basic analytic procedure (Glaser & Strauss, 1967; Strauss & Corbin, 1990; Newman & Benz, 1998; Heppner & Heppner, 2004). Throughout the data collection process, units of data are constantly compared with each other, in order to generate conceptual categories that emerge from the data. “Grounded theorists simultaneously address the process of research and the product of research; they are inseparable” (Newman & Benz, p. 61).

**Setting.** In order to allow for theory to build from the data, twelve 60 to 90 minute interviews were conducted with executives in 2009 and 2010. Like the setting described earlier in the quantitative survey research, the qualitative research focused on current and former executives from varying sized organizations representing diverse industries in a medium-sized, Midwestern metropolitan area in the United States. The executives represented corporate, education, government, health care, manufacturing, non-profit, and professional services organizations.

**Procedure.** Research question #2 sought to understand what leadership skills women must possess in order to be successful in executive level roles. One method that’s
particularly well-suited to both the population under study and grounded theory is to probe the views of women executives themselves (Lincoln & Guba, 1985). In this study, the researcher facilitated the emergence of substantive theory inductively derived during interviews with individuals who have experienced leadership at the executive level.

Beginning in early 2009 through 2010, upon the completion of the collection and analysis of the quantitative data, the researcher conducted the interviews. First using the data generated in the online survey, the researcher identified several women CEO’s and other c-level executives who had indicated a willingness to participate in follow-up interviews.

Initially, three women CEO’s were invited to meet with the researcher via email. They were sent information about the research process, some sample interview questions, and the institution’s IRB Letter of Informed Consent, which they had seen previously prior to completing the online survey. The process and sample interview questions can be found in Appendix C and Appendix D.

The participants were told that the data they provided would be used to help better understand the leadership behaviors women needed to develop in order to be successful in executive level roles. In total, ten women were invited to participate. Additionally, two men with extensive experience working with women executives were invited in order to provide alternative perspectives as to the leadership behaviors they observed in the most successful women executives they worked with. Participants were again assured of confidentiality in the reporting of the findings, and that their stories and experiences would be shared with executive education and organizational development professionals,
so that they better understand the leadership skills these women attribute to their success in executive roles.

The participants were told that the meeting would take approximately 60 minutes and could occur at the location of their choice. They were told that the interview would be audio recorded and the data transcribed, that the conversations would remain confidential and that pseudonyms would be used in the reporting of any data. In addition to recording the interviews, the researcher used field notes and a journal to record insights and observations throughout the interview process. The interviews were semi-structured, and sought to build upon previous interviews, each time introducing what was previously discussed or observed in other interviews.

The first interview was held in January 2009. After the first interview, the recording was transcribed using a digital transcription software program and reviewed by the researcher for errors. The transcript was coded by the researcher using open coding, during which the researcher reviews the transcript looking for passages of text that have some analytical significance and gives them a descriptive name or code (Glaser & Strauss 1967; Strauss & Corbin 1990). A transcript of the interview, with the codes included, was sent to the executive to review it error, as well as provide any additional or supplemental information. This process, called member checking, was done so that those interviewed could verify that the data recorded and the interpretations of that data were accurate and reflective of their experiences. Member checks helped to improve the validity of the interpretation of the research, and can foster a more trusting relationship
with the individual being observed (Lincoln & Guba, 1985). Each transcript was sent to the corresponding participant for review.

Initially, the transcript was coded using the comments function in Microsoft Word. Groups of codes that share a similar characteristic were then grouped into categories, allowing flexibility for codes to be included into multiple categories when appropriate. The researcher utilized this axial coding process to connect similar codes from new or previous interviews into categories and then into themes as they emerged from the data. Upon the conclusion of coding of the first interview transcript, the research process continued, including more interviews, transcription, open coding and member checks.

As the amount of data generated increased, the number of codes, categories and themes increased. Transcripts were printed out onto colored paper, each one representing one interview with one participant. This allowed for individual quotes, concepts and codes of the coded transcript to be cut and placed into folders containing similar codes from other transcripts. The data were organized and reorganized into themes, using folders throughout the data collection and interview process. Six women and then two men were interviewed in 2009. Another four women were interviewed in 2010.

The data that emerged from the participant interviews were analyzed and constantly compared to data collected from previous interviews to construct interpretations and understanding (Charmaz, 2000; Glaser & Strauss, 1967; Strauss & Corbin, 1990). Because this study utilized grounded theory and the constant comparison method of analysis, as the researcher uncovered similar codes and emerging themes from
the interview transcripts, they were shared and discussed with the participants during the interviews in order to interpret meaning from the themes. By mid-2010, no new meaning seemed to be heard or interpreted in the interviews. At total of 12 interviews with 10 women and two men were conducted before reaching saturation.

**Instrument.** The primary instrument in grounded theory data collection and analysis is the researcher (Lincoln & Guba, 1985; Merriam, 2002). The purpose is to understand the phenomena from the experience of those who live it (Charmaz, 2000). “The human instrument allows data to be collected and analyzed in an interactive process (Erlandson, Harris, Skipper & Allen, 1993, p. 39). Lincoln and Guba (1985) wrote “truly listening to the story rather than decrying the fact that the instrument used to gather data affects this process, the human interviewer can be a marvelously smart, adaptable, flexible instrument who can respond to situations with skills, tact and understanding” (p. 228).

In this type of qualitative study utilizing grounded theory, unobtrusive access is important because the researcher is the primary instrument in grounded theory research (Glaser & Strauss, 1967, Strauss & Corbin, 1990). The researcher had never worked for any of these companies directly, but had worked in executive education for more than ten years and had long standing relationships with these organizations and their senior leaders, which helped to provide context and familiarity and foster access and open communication.

Researcher biases can threaten the external validity of a study, reducing the ability to generalize the findings to the population (Krathwohl, 1998). With previous exposure
to some of the sample population, the researcher paid careful attention to biases, predilections, attitudes, likes and dislikes during this research, in order to monitor her own personal influences and lessen the impact on sampling and data collection (Krathwohl, 1998).

**Participants.** This study utilized non-random, purposive sampling techniques, as the participants were included first through their voluntary participation in the quantitative survey data and then when they volunteered to participate in the follow-up interview. This type of sample is often used by researchers to provide “information, perspective, contacts, or whatever the researcher needs next” so that the researcher can “put their ideas to the test. Such sampling strengthens the logic of the method and, when done properly, is a stringent test of the findings” (Krathwohl, 1998, p. 172).

Ultimately, ten women who held the role of vice president, CEO or COO were included in this sample, as well as two men who held the roles of CEO and COO. They represent a variety of types of businesses from a variety of industries. More specific data about these participants can be found in the analysis presented in chapter five.

**Data analysis.** Grounded theory and its constant comparative method of data analysis are valuable in generating categories of data first, followed by hypotheses and substantive theory (Glaser & Strauss, 1967). During grounded theory research, emergent categories form patterns and interrelations which will ultimately generate the core of the emerging hypotheses. Data analysis is not a separate part of the process in grounded theory research, as the data is analyzed while they were being collected. “Generating hypotheses requires evidence enough only to establish a suggestion – not an excessive
piling up of evidence to establish a proof, and the consequent hindering of the generation of new hypothesis” (Glaser & Strauss, p. 40).

The researcher also analyzed field notes, and a journal of recorded insights, to facilitate connections between the incidents and data collected. Coded data were then collapsed into categories until developing theories began to emerge. The researcher continued to document any insights that arose, and looked for connections within and between the central categories and properties of the emerging concepts.

The links between categories are integral to the grounded theory process (Merriam, 2002). Glaser & Strauss (1967) identify four criteria that can be used to assess the emergent theories, which include fitness, understanding, generality and control. They state that “a grounded theory must fit the data, work in terms of a useful explanation, be relevant to actual problems, and be capable of being modified by future inquiry” (Glaser, 1978) Theoretical sampling encourages the researcher to follow the direction that the data lead (Newman & Benz, 1998). Plausible rival explanations for the theories were tested during subsequent interviews. Ultimately, ten themes emerged from the data, and are presented in chapter five.
CHAPTER IV
ANALYSIS OF QUANTITATIVE DATA

The purpose of this study was to understand the leadership practices of women executives, so that those in executive development and executive education can develop a stronger understanding of how to help women leaders develop the skills that they need to be successful in executive level positions. This chapter presents the data analysis of the quantitative portion of this study in order to answer the question, Are there significant differences in the leadership practices of executive women and executive men?

Organization of data analysis

While the results of the study did identify three leadership behaviors worthy of further exploration, it is first important to understand the sample population. This chapter first provides an analysis of the demographic data of the sample, as well as a rationale for reducing the sample size from 476 to 320 in order to include only respondents who indicated that they were in an executive level position. The frequencies and other descriptive statistics for the reduced sample are therefore also presented.

Following that analysis, the 30 leadership behaviors included on the Leadership Practices Inventory (LPI) are presented, and the results of the one-way between groups analysis of variance (ANOVA) are discussed. The assessment used to measure the frequency of leadership behaviors, the LPI includes 30 questions. The 30 questions are
grouped into 5 leadership practices (6 questions each). The analysis includes the individual leadership behavior data (30 items) as well as the group data (5 leadership practices). The analysis of the 30 individual leadership behaviors is presented first, followed by the analysis of five practices.

**Response rate**

By late January 2008, the online survey generated 476 responses, including 320 who identified themselves as directors, vice presidents, senior executives or c-level executives (chief executive officer, chief financial officer, chief information officer, etc), for an overall response rate of 24.75%. There were an unrecorded number of returned emails from faulty email addresses, so the true response rate may have been higher. Dillman, Smyth, and Christian (2008) found that typical email and internet surveys of higher level corporate executives generate a response rate of approximately 10%, so the response rate yielded in this study compares favorably. The positive relationship between the university and the business community, as well as the anonymity of using online assessment instruments, likely contributed to the relatively high response rate from this group. The name recognition of the two CEO’s whose names were used on the letter may have contributed to the response rate as well.

Some researchers might suggest that the response rate was actually lower than reported here and that the 156 individuals who did not report holding a director or above level position ought to be removed from the response rate, leaving 1767 potential respondents versus the 1923 reported here. That would generate a response rate of 18.1% (320/1767=.181) which still is still higher than the 10% response rate reported as typical.

Demographic data analysis

Before understanding the analysis of the LPI survey results, it is first important to understand the sample population of respondents, as well as the reduced sample based upon organizational rank. Tables 1-3 presented the frequency distribution for the demographic data for the total sample as well as for executive women and executive men. The four tables that follow, tables 4-7, reflect the frequencies and percentages of the sample limited to the 320 individuals who indicated they were directors, vice presidents or above, and includes total executive data, as well as total women executives and total men executives.

Gender. Four demographic questions were included in the survey following the 30 Leadership Practices Inventory assessment questions, in order to better understand and analyze the participants. Of the 476 total responses received, 138 (29%) indicated their gender as female and 338 (71%) as male.

Years of professional experience. Respondents indicated their number of years of total work experience. This question was asked in order to determine how experienced the sample population was, as well as to compare the years of professional experience of the total women in the sample relative to the total men. Table 1 shows the results overall, as well as the distribution of years of work experience for women only and men only.

The highest number of respondents (n=112, 23.53%) indicated that they had 21-25 years overall professional experience, and the second highest percentage (n=100,
21.01%) fell into the category of 26-30 years of professional experience. This is consistent for both genders as well as the largest number of women (n=33, 23.91%) and the largest number of men (n=79, 23.37%) were also in the 21-25 years of experience category, and the second largest groups (women, n=25, 18.12%; men, n=75, 22.19%) were in the 26-30 years of professional experience category. Overall, 68.49% of the sample (including 68.11% of the total women and 69.23% of men) indicated they had 21 or more years of total professional experience, suggesting that an experienced group of professionals participated in this study.

Table 1

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Years of Experience</th>
<th>Total Sample</th>
<th>Total Women</th>
<th>Total Men</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1-5</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6-10</td>
<td>22</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>16</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11-15</td>
<td>53</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>37</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>16-20</td>
<td>70</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>50</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>21-25</td>
<td>112</td>
<td>33</td>
<td>79</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>26-30</td>
<td>100</td>
<td>25</td>
<td>75</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>31-35</td>
<td>54</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>36</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>36-40</td>
<td>32</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>25</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>40 or more</td>
<td>28</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>19</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>476</td>
<td>138</td>
<td>338</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Organizational rank. Respondents indicated their rank in the organization, using seven categories. Table 2 shows the results of the overall sample, as well as the organizational rank distribution of the women in the sample and men. Overall, 43 respondents (9.03%) identified themselves as a c-level executive (chief executive officer, chief financial officer, chief information officer, etc). Another 28, or 5.88%, indicated
that they held the rank of senior executive or equivalent, while 68 (14.29%) indicated vice president or equivalent, 181 (38.04%) claimed director or equivalent (manager of managers). A closer look at the gender breakdown of the sample showed that 36 men (10.65%) and 7 women (5.07%) reported holding the rank of c-level executive, indicating that twice the percentage of men in this sample are working at the highest level of the organization compared to women.

Conversely, a look at the bottom three levels of the organization (individual contributor, first-level supervisor and middle manager or equivalent) showed a greater percentage of women working in the lower ranks (50 out of 138, 36.23%) as compared to men (106/338, 31.36%). So, while similar percentages of women (68.11%) and men (69.23%) reported having 21 or more years of work experience, women are more likely than men (36.23% vs. 31.36%) to hold positions in the bottom three levels of the organization and half as likely as men (5.07% vs. 10.65%) to hold a position at the highest ranking c-level.

Table 2

Organizational Rank for Total Sample and by Gender

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Rank in Organization</th>
<th>Total Sample</th>
<th>Total Women</th>
<th>Total Men</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>f</td>
<td>%</td>
<td>f</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>C-level executive</td>
<td>43</td>
<td>9.03</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Senior executive or equivalent</td>
<td>28</td>
<td>5.88</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Vice President or equivalent</td>
<td>68</td>
<td>14.29</td>
<td>21</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Director or equivalent</td>
<td>181</td>
<td>38.04</td>
<td>55</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Middle manager or equivalent</td>
<td>91</td>
<td>19.12</td>
<td>31</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>First level supervisor or equivalent</td>
<td>45</td>
<td>9.45</td>
<td>11</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Individual contributor or specialist</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>4.20</td>
<td>8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>476</td>
<td>100.00</td>
<td>138</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
**Type of organization.** Respondents also indicated the type of organization that they worked for. Table 3 reports that data. Overall, 60.29% of the sample (287 respondents) indicated that they work in a corporate organization. This includes 47.82% of the total women and 65.38% of the total men. Note that more than 17% men work in corporate organizations than women.

The remaining 39.71% of the sample reported working in a non-profit environment. Of the total women, 52.17% reported working for a non-profit and just 34.63% of the total men. While just 10.49% of the total sample report working in health care (both corporate and non-profit combined), this accounts for 18.84% of the total women and just 6.8% of the total men.

Table 3

*Type of Organization for Total Sample and by Gender*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Type of Organization</th>
<th>Total Sample</th>
<th></th>
<th>Total Women</th>
<th></th>
<th>Total Men</th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>f</td>
<td>%</td>
<td>f</td>
<td>%</td>
<td>f</td>
<td>%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Corporate – Service</td>
<td>79</td>
<td>16.60</td>
<td>17</td>
<td>12.32</td>
<td>62</td>
<td>18.34</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Corporate – Manufacturing</td>
<td>125</td>
<td>26.26</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>14.49</td>
<td>105</td>
<td>31.07</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Corporate - Health Care</td>
<td>24</td>
<td>5.04</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>9.42</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>3.25</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Corporate – Other</td>
<td>59</td>
<td>12.39</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>11.59</td>
<td>43</td>
<td>12.72</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Non-Profit – Education</td>
<td>52</td>
<td>10.92</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>14.49</td>
<td>32</td>
<td>9.47</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Non-Profit – Government</td>
<td>103</td>
<td>21.64</td>
<td>35</td>
<td>25.36</td>
<td>68</td>
<td>20.12</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Non-Profit - Health Care</td>
<td>25</td>
<td>5.25</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>9.42</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>3.55</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Non-Profit – Other</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>1.89</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>2.90</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>1.48</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>476</td>
<td>100.00</td>
<td>138</td>
<td>100.00</td>
<td>338</td>
<td>100.00</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Limiting the sample.** Because research question #1 asked Are there significant differences in the leadership behaviors of executive women and executive men, and the term “executive” had previously been limited to those who hold the position of director or above in an organization, the data were sorted by rank, and the responses from those
indicating their organizational rank as middle manager, first level supervisor, or individual contributors (categories 5, 6, and 7) were removed from the sample data for analysis. Therefore, a discussion of the data frequencies, limited to the remaining 320 responses reported by those indicating their organizational rank as director or above, follows below.

**Gender for total sample and total executives.** Of the 320 respondents in this reduced sample, 88 (27.5%) are female, and 232 (72.5%) are male. Table 4 depicts that data. This is a slight reduction in percentage of female executives relative to the overall sample (28.99% women in the larger sample with n=476). However, women still make up more than one quarter of the total executives in this research.

Table 4

*Gender for Total Sample and Total Executives*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Gender</th>
<th>Total Sample</th>
<th>Total Executives</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>f</td>
<td>%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Women</td>
<td>138</td>
<td>29.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Men</td>
<td>339</td>
<td>71.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>476</td>
<td>100.00</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Years of professional experience for total executives and by gender.** By using the reduced sample size, the percentage of respondents who indicate 21 or more years of professional experience increased to 76.25%, which is not surprising given that the sample eliminated those in the three lowest levels of rank in their organizations which are likely to be those with less experience. Still, 242 of the 320 respondents indicated 21 or years of professional experience, with the two highest reporting categories being 21-25
years (83 respondents or 25.94%) and 26-30 years (81 respondents, or 25.31%). Table 5 shows the distribution for total executives and for total executives by gender.

Among the women respondents, 78.41% report having more than 21 years of experience, compared to 75.43% of men, and 27.27% of the women have 31 years or more experience compared to just 21.14% of the men. The data points to a higher percentage of the women executives in the sample indicating they have the three highest levels of years of professional experience (31-35, 36-40, 40 or more) than the men.

Table 5

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Years of Experience</th>
<th>Total Execs</th>
<th>Total Women Execs</th>
<th>Total Men Execs</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>f</td>
<td>%</td>
<td>f</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1-5</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>0.31</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6-10</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>1.88</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11-15</td>
<td>28</td>
<td>8.75</td>
<td>9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>16-20</td>
<td>41</td>
<td>12.81</td>
<td>9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>21-25</td>
<td>83</td>
<td>25.94</td>
<td>25</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>26-30</td>
<td>81</td>
<td>25.21</td>
<td>20</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>31-35</td>
<td>37</td>
<td>11.56</td>
<td>11</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>36-40</td>
<td>23</td>
<td>7.19</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>40 or more</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>6.25</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>320</td>
<td>100.00</td>
<td>88</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Organizational rank for total executives and by gender.* Respondents were asked to identify their current rank in the organization. This data is shown in Table 6. Of the reduced sample of 320, 43 individuals (13.44%) indicated that they held the title of c-level executive (CEO, CFO, CIO, etc). When gender is considered, this category of c-level executives accounts only 7.95% (7 of 88) of women, compared to 15.52% (36 of
Men make up a larger percentage of c-level executives in this sample, relative to women.

The data also show that 55 of 88 of the executive women (62.50%) indicated their rank as director, compared to 126 of 232 (54.31%) of the executive men. While women were previously shown to be have more years of professional experience, they are in less senior executive roles than men.

Table 6  
*Organizational Rank for Total Executives and by Gender*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Organizational Rank</th>
<th>Total Execs</th>
<th>Total Women Execs</th>
<th>Total Men Execs</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>C-level executive</td>
<td>43</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>36</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Senior executive or equivalent</td>
<td>28</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>23</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Vice President or equivalent</td>
<td>68</td>
<td>21</td>
<td>47</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Director or equivalent</td>
<td>181</td>
<td>55</td>
<td>126</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>320</td>
<td>88</td>
<td>232</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 7  
*Type of Organization: Total Executives and by Gender*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Type of Organization</th>
<th>Total Execs</th>
<th>Total Women Execs</th>
<th>Total Men Execs</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Corporate – Service</td>
<td>60</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>46</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Corporate – Manufacturing</td>
<td>90</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>79</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Corporate - Health Care</td>
<td>21</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Corporate – Other</td>
<td>27</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>23</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Non-Profit – Education</td>
<td>38</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>23</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Non-Profit – Government</td>
<td>55</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>35</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Non-Profit - Health Care</td>
<td>22</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>12</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Non-Profit – Other</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>320</td>
<td>88</td>
<td>232</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
**Type of organization for total executives and by gender.** Participants were asked to identify the type of organization that they were currently working for. Table 7 shows this data.

The percentage of executives who indicated that they work for a corporate organization is higher for men than it is for women. The four corporate responses collectively accounted for 158 out of the 232 responses from men (68.10%) compared to less than half of the women (n=40, 45.45%). Conversely, a larger percentage of women executives reported working for non-profit organizations (48/88=54.55% of women vs. 74/232=31.90% of men), as well as in health care organizations (23.86% of women and 9.48% of men; includes both corporate-health care and non-profit-health care). Just under one-quarter of the women worked in health care compared to less than 10% of the men. Therefore, a larger percentage of the women executives studied worked for non-profit organizations and health care organizations and a larger percentage of male executives worked in corporate organizations.

**Answering research question #1**

In order to answer research question #1, Are there significant differences in the leadership behaviors of executive women and executive men, the responses to the 30 question Leadership Practices Inventory (LPI) were analyzed by gender. Gender is the independent variable. The 30 leadership behaviors are the dependent variables. The sample included the 320 respondents who indicated that they held an executive level (director, vice president or above) position in their organization.
Analysis of data

The participants rated each of 30 questions on a 1 to 10 scale, based upon their frequency of use. The scale measurements are (1) Almost never do what is described in the statement; (2) Rarely; (3) Seldom; (4) Once in a while; (5) Occasionally; (6) Sometimes; (7) Fairly Often; (8) Usually; (9) Very Frequently; and (10) Almost always do what is described in the statement (Kouzes & Posner, 1987).

The data for each leadership behavior were analyzed, as were the composite scores for each of the five leadership practices. Scores for the five practices were created by adding scores for the six leadership behaviors (1-10 scale) that relate to each practice (range = 6 to 60) (Kouzes & Posner, 1987).

Presentation of descriptive characteristics of respondents

Descriptive statistics, including measures of central tendencies, allow the researcher to organize and summarize the data in order to be better able to describe the important characteristics (Heiman, 2003). The \( N \) represents the “number of scores in a set of data” (Heiman, 2003, p. 41). In this study, the \( N \) is disaggregated by gender, so that the number of female, male and total number of respondents per leadership behavior are reported.

30 leadership behaviors. For each of the 30 individual leadership behaviors from the Leadership Practices Inventory (LPI), \( N \), mean, standard deviation, and range were calculated for the total executives, for executive women and for executive men. Because this study sought to understand how leadership behaviors are influenced by
gender, it was important that the data were analyzed and compared by gender. Appendix F presents the central tendency statistics for all 30 leadership behaviors from the LPI. Tables 8-10 provide the top 10 most frequently utilized leadership behavior, as reported by total executives, executive women and executive men.

Table 8

*Top 10 Most Frequently Demonstrated Leadership Behaviors: Total Executives*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Leadership Behavior</th>
<th>n</th>
<th>M</th>
<th>SD</th>
<th>Range</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>14. Treats Others With Dignity And Respect</td>
<td>320</td>
<td>9.65</td>
<td>0.67</td>
<td>5-10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11. Follows Through On Promises And Commitments</td>
<td>320</td>
<td>9.25</td>
<td>0.89</td>
<td>6-10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4. Develops Cooperative Relationships</td>
<td>320</td>
<td>9.15</td>
<td>0.98</td>
<td>5-10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1. Sets A Personal Example Of What Is Expected</td>
<td>320</td>
<td>9.14</td>
<td>0.87</td>
<td>6-10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5. Praises People For A Job Well Done</td>
<td>320</td>
<td>8.81</td>
<td>1.19</td>
<td>4-10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>24. Gives People Choice About How To Do Their Work</td>
<td>320</td>
<td>8.75</td>
<td>1.22</td>
<td>3-10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>19. Supports Decisions Other People Make</td>
<td>320</td>
<td>8.60</td>
<td>1.07</td>
<td>5-10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9. Actively Listens To Diverse Points Of View</td>
<td>320</td>
<td>8.50</td>
<td>1.16</td>
<td>3-10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>26. Is Clear About His/Her Philosophy Of Leadership</td>
<td>320</td>
<td>8.47</td>
<td>1.46</td>
<td>2-10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>23. Makes Certain That Goals, Plans And Milestones Are Set</td>
<td>320</td>
<td>8.43</td>
<td>1.40</td>
<td>3-10</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

All three samples report using the same top five leadership behaviors the most frequently. The 320 total executives, 88 executive women and 232 executive men report the highest mean score on item #14, treats others with dignity and respect. Their reported
mean score of 9.65 falls between 9-Very frequently do what is described in the statement and 10- Almost always do what is described in the statement. The remaining top four items are the same for all three groups, although the order changes between them. The other leadership behaviors reported among the top five most frequently utilized leadership behavior are items #11. follows through on promises and commitments, #4 develops cooperative relationships, #1 sets a personal example of what is expected and #4 praises people for a job well done.

Table 9

Top 10 Most Frequently Demonstrated Leadership Behaviors: Executive Women

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Leadership Behavior</th>
<th>n</th>
<th>M</th>
<th>SD</th>
<th>Range</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>14. Treats Others With Dignity And Respect</td>
<td>88</td>
<td>9.74</td>
<td>0.56</td>
<td>7-10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4. Develops Cooperative Relationships</td>
<td>88</td>
<td>9.32</td>
<td>0.77</td>
<td>7-10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1. Sets A Personal Example Of What Is Expected</td>
<td>88</td>
<td>9.26</td>
<td>0.86</td>
<td>6-10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11. Follows Through On Promises And Commitments</td>
<td>88</td>
<td>9.18</td>
<td>0.94</td>
<td>6-10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5. Praises People For A Job Well Done</td>
<td>88</td>
<td>8.91</td>
<td>1.16</td>
<td>4-10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>24. Gives People Choice About How To Do Their Work</td>
<td>88</td>
<td>8.85</td>
<td>1.19</td>
<td>4-10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>27. Speaks With Conviction About Meaning Of Work</td>
<td>88</td>
<td>8.82</td>
<td>1.17</td>
<td>6-10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>19. Supports Decisions Other People Make</td>
<td>88</td>
<td>8.77</td>
<td>1.04</td>
<td>5-10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>23. Makes Certain That Goals, Plans And Milestones Are Set</td>
<td>88</td>
<td>8.63</td>
<td>1.28</td>
<td>4-10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>30. Gives Team Members Appreciation And Support</td>
<td>88</td>
<td>8.63</td>
<td>1.19</td>
<td>5-10</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Among the top 10 leadership behaviors, each of the groups had four mean scores above 9—Very frequently do what is described in the statement and six scores above 8—Usually do what is described in the statement. Women executives reported most frequently demonstrating eight of the same top 10 behaviors reported by the total executive sample and seven of the same top 10 of executive men.

Table 10

Top 10 Most Frequently Demonstrated Leadership Behaviors: Executive Men

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Leadership Behavior</th>
<th>n</th>
<th>M</th>
<th>SD</th>
<th>Range</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>14. Treats Others With Dignity And Respect</td>
<td>232</td>
<td>9.61</td>
<td>0.70</td>
<td>5-10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11. Follows Through On Promises And Commitments</td>
<td>232</td>
<td>9.28</td>
<td>0.87</td>
<td>6-10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1. Sets A Personal Example Of What Is Expected</td>
<td>232</td>
<td>9.10</td>
<td>0.87</td>
<td>6-10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4. Develops Cooperative Relationships</td>
<td>232</td>
<td>9.09</td>
<td>1.04</td>
<td>5-10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5. Praises People For A Job Well Done</td>
<td>232</td>
<td>8.78</td>
<td>1.21</td>
<td>5-10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>24. Gives People Choice About How To Do Their Work</td>
<td>232</td>
<td>8.72</td>
<td>1.23</td>
<td>3-10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>19. Supports Decisions Other People Make</td>
<td>232</td>
<td>8.54</td>
<td>1.07</td>
<td>5-10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9. Actively Listens To Diverse Points Of View</td>
<td>232</td>
<td>8.47</td>
<td>1.22</td>
<td>3-10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>26. Is Clear About His/Her Philosophy Of Leadership</td>
<td>232</td>
<td>8.44</td>
<td>1.52</td>
<td>2-10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>21. Builds Consensus Around Organizational Values</td>
<td>232</td>
<td>8.38</td>
<td>1.38</td>
<td>3-10</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Two behaviors, #24 gives people a choice about how to do their work and #19 supports decisions other people make were shared by all three groups in their top 6-10 most frequently demonstrated behaviors. Item #23, makes certain that goals, plans and
milestones are set was also among the top 6-10 leader behaviors for the total executives and executive men.

Executive men and the total executive sample share nine of the same top 10 items. Given that executive men account for 72.5% of the total executive sample (232/320), this is not a surprise. Among their top 6-10 leadership behaviors, both groups include #24 gives people a choice about how to do their work #19 supports decisions other people make, 9. actively listens to diverse points of view and #26 is clear about his/her philosophy of leadership.

**Five practices.** The LPI instrument includes 30 items, each of which reflects a different leadership behavior associated with good leadership. As discussed previously, Kouzes and Posner grouped the 30 behaviors to form the five practices of exemplary leadership. The central tendency statistics for the five practices are shown in Table 11.

**Table 11**

*Measures of Central Tendency & Dispersion of Five Practices of Exemplary Leaders: Total Executives*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Leadership Practice</th>
<th>n</th>
<th>M</th>
<th>SD</th>
<th>Range</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Enable Others To Act</td>
<td>320</td>
<td>44.66</td>
<td>3.67</td>
<td>24-50</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Model the Way</td>
<td>320</td>
<td>41.94</td>
<td>4.42</td>
<td>25-50</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Challenge the Process</td>
<td>320</td>
<td>41.01</td>
<td>5.45</td>
<td>22-50</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Encourage the Heart</td>
<td>320</td>
<td>40.57</td>
<td>6.24</td>
<td>19-50</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Inspire a Shared Vision</td>
<td>320</td>
<td>39.15</td>
<td>6.59</td>
<td>11-50</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The highest rated mean score for total executives was enable others to act (EOA), with a \( M \) of 44.66. Relative to the most recent norms published by Kouzes and Posner in 2011, this sample reports a lower mean score on each of the five practices, by an average
of 4.536 points. See Table 12 for a summary of these scores relative to the Kouzes and Posner norms (2011).

Table 12

**Total Executives Scores Relative to LPI Norms**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Leadership Practice</th>
<th>Norms M</th>
<th>Sample M</th>
<th>Difference</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Enable Others To Act</td>
<td>49.34</td>
<td>44.66</td>
<td>4.68</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Model the Way</td>
<td>46.70</td>
<td>41.94</td>
<td>4.76</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Challenge the Process</td>
<td>44.69</td>
<td>41.01</td>
<td>5.12</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Encourage the Heart</td>
<td>45.69</td>
<td>40.57</td>
<td>5.12</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Inspire a Shared Vision</td>
<td>43.59</td>
<td>39.15</td>
<td>5.44</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Average point difference</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>4.53</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Women executives reported higher mean scores on all five practices, relative to their male colleagues. The average mean score for all five practices for executive women was 42.03. Executive men reported a total average mean score of 41.27 on all five practices. Table 13 shows the central tendency statistics of the five practices for executive women while Table 14 presents similar data for executive men.

Table 13

**Measures of Central Tendency & Dispersion of Five Practices: Executive Women**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Leadership Practice</th>
<th>n</th>
<th>M</th>
<th>SD</th>
<th>Range</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Enable Others To Act</td>
<td>88</td>
<td>45.27</td>
<td>3.36</td>
<td>33-50</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Model the Way</td>
<td>88</td>
<td>42.22</td>
<td>4.31</td>
<td>28-50</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Challenge the Process</td>
<td>88</td>
<td>41.78</td>
<td>4.94</td>
<td>25-50</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Encourage the Heart</td>
<td>88</td>
<td>41.64</td>
<td>5.70</td>
<td>25-50</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Inspire a Shared Vision</td>
<td>88</td>
<td>39.25</td>
<td>6.72</td>
<td>11-50</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

While the collective difference between the average score of the two groups is less than one point, it is worth noting that women executives rated themselves as
practicing all five practices more frequently than executive-level men. The data do not suggest that women executives are better leaders than men, but it does indicate that women executives view themselves as utilizing these five practices of exemplary leadership more frequently than men.

Table 14

*Measures of Central Tendency & Dispersion of Five Practices: Executive Men*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Leadership Practice</th>
<th>n</th>
<th>M</th>
<th>SD</th>
<th>Range</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Enable Others To Act</td>
<td>232</td>
<td>44.42</td>
<td>3.77</td>
<td>24-50</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Model the Way</td>
<td>232</td>
<td>41.94</td>
<td>4.42</td>
<td>25-50</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Challenge the Process</td>
<td>232</td>
<td>40.71</td>
<td>5.61</td>
<td>22-50</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Encourage the Heart</td>
<td>232</td>
<td>40.17</td>
<td>6.39</td>
<td>15-50</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Inspire a Shared Vision</td>
<td>232</td>
<td>39.11</td>
<td>6.55</td>
<td>21-50</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Analysis of variance (ANOVA)**

In order to determine which of the dependent variables showed significant differences between executive women and executive men, a series of one-way between groups analysis of variance (ANOVA) analyses were performed. The independent variable is gender, a categorical variable with two or more groups, as required by the ANOVA analysis (Heiman, 2003).

The 30 individual leadership behaviors and the five leadership practices of the LPI assessment were analyzed. These dependent variables are continuous variables, with possible scores ranging from 1-10 on each of the 30 leadership behaviors and possible scores on the 5 practices ranging from 6-60.

The null hypothesis for these analyses are that there is no difference in the leadership behaviors by gender ($H_0 : \mu_1 = \mu_2$). The alternative hypothesis says that there
is a difference in the leadership behaviors between the genders ($H_a: \text{not all } \mu \text{'s are equal, men and women differ in their leadership practices}$).

**30 leadership behaviors.** An analysis of variance (ANOVA) was first performed for each of the 30 leadership behaviors from the LPI. The overall results can be found in Appendix G.

**Significant results.** Initially, the alpha level was set at the level of .05. Of the 30 leadership behaviors, three were initially found to be significantly different between executive women and executive men. That is, women executives reported engaging in three leadership behaviors significantly more frequently than men. These behaviors include #25 finds ways to celebrate accomplishments, #27 speaks with conviction about the meaning of work, and #29 ensures that people grow in their jobs. Table 15 shows the results.

Table 15

*Analysis of Variance: Leadership Behaviors with Significant Results*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Category</th>
<th>SS</th>
<th>df</th>
<th>MS</th>
<th>F</th>
<th>Sig.</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>25. Finds Ways To Celebrate Accomplishments Bn Groups</td>
<td>25.709</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>25.709</td>
<td>11.466</td>
<td>0.001</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Wn Groups</td>
<td>713.041</td>
<td>318</td>
<td>2.242</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>6220.75</td>
<td>319</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>27. Speaks With Conviction About Meaning of Work Bn Groups</td>
<td>18.764</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>18.764</td>
<td>7.521</td>
<td>0.006</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Wn Groups</td>
<td>793.436</td>
<td>318</td>
<td>2.495</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>812.200</td>
<td>319</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>29. Ensures People Grow In Their Jobs Bn Groups</td>
<td>7.830</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>7.830</td>
<td>4.270</td>
<td>0.040</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Wn Groups</td>
<td>583.058</td>
<td>318</td>
<td>1.834</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>590.888</td>
<td>319</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Corrected results.** Whenever a researcher conducts multiple hypothesis tests on the same data set, the possibility of finding differences by chance tends to increase. In
order to control for the multiple tests conducted here, the Bonferroni correction procedure was used. This procedure helps to control the probability of Type I errors, comparisons of mean differences reported as significantly different when in fact they are not. The correction does this by adjusting a $\rho$-value to a more stringent critical value, depending on the number of mean comparisons conducted. In this case, because there are 30 gender-based comparisons (i.e., each item on the LPI assessment), the alpha level .05 is divided by 30 (.05/30). Thus, the .05 critical value is now reduced to $\rho = .001667$.

Using the corrected alpha changes the previously reported significant results for three leadership behaviors (items #25, #27 and #29). Now, only one leadership behavior (#25 finds ways to celebrate the accomplishments of others) is significant using this more stringent value. In particular, for item #25, the difference in means was still significant $[F(1, 318) = 11.466, \rho < .0017]$. Therefore, for leadership behavior #25, the null hypothesis is rejected and the alternative hypothesis accepted. In answer to the question, Are there significant differences in the leadership practices of executive women and executive men, there is a significant difference between executive women and executive men in their views on the frequency to which they find ways to celebrate the accomplishments of others. Female executives report demonstrating this leadership behavior more frequently than male executives to a significant degree.

It is also worth noting, however, that while the Bonferroni correction may reduce the probability of Type I errors, some researchers warn against its use because it can also increase the probability of Type II errors (Perneger, 1998). A Type II error is a false negative, occurring when a comparison of mean differences is not believed to be
significantly different when in fact it is (Krathwohl, 1998). This risks suppressing some interesting findings. While leadership behaviors #27 (speaks with conviction about the meaning of work) and #29 (ensures people grow in their jobs) are not significantly different by gender using the corrected alpha, they nevertheless warrant further exploration and research.

Table 16

Analysis of variance: Five Practices

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Leadership Practice</th>
<th>$SS$</th>
<th>$df$</th>
<th>$MS$</th>
<th>$F$</th>
<th>Sig.</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Enable Others to Act</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bn Groups</td>
<td>46.13</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>46.13</td>
<td>3.447</td>
<td>0.064</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Wn Groups</td>
<td>4256.06</td>
<td>318</td>
<td>13.384</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>4302.19</td>
<td>319</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Model the Way</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bn Groups</td>
<td>9.41</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>9.408</td>
<td>0.482</td>
<td>0.488</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Wn Groups</td>
<td>6211.34</td>
<td>318</td>
<td>19.533</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>6220.75</td>
<td>319</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Challenge The Process</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bn Groups</td>
<td>73.44</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>73.439</td>
<td>2.484</td>
<td>0.116</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Wn Groups</td>
<td>9400.55</td>
<td>318</td>
<td>29.561</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>9473.99</td>
<td>319</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Encourage The Heart</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bn Groups</td>
<td>137.54</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>137.539</td>
<td>3.563</td>
<td>0.060</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Wn Groups</td>
<td>12276.81</td>
<td>318</td>
<td>38.606</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>12414.35</td>
<td>319</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Inspire A Shared Vision</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bn Groups</td>
<td>1.29</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1.291</td>
<td>0.030</td>
<td>0.863</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Wn Groups</td>
<td>13834.81</td>
<td>318</td>
<td>43.506</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>13836.10</td>
<td>319</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Five practices. An analysis of variance was also conducted on the composite scores on the Leadership Practices Inventory for the five leadership practices. That data is shown in Table 16. The ANOVA output for the five leadership practices shows that there are no significant differences overall between Females and Males for any of the five Practices. For two of the five practices, the observed $p$-values were very close to
conventional ($\rho<.05$) significance levels. For both Enabling Others to Act and Encourage the Heart, women scored higher than men, but only at $\rho<.07$.

**Effect Size**

The effect size was calculated for the significant difference. The effect size is the “proportion of variance accounted for in an experiment, which indicates how consistently differences in the dependent scores are ‘caused’ by changes in the independent variable” (Heiman, 2003, p. 516). To find the effect size, the following formula is used:

$$\text{Eta squared} = \frac{SS_{bn}}{\text{Total SS}}$$

Cohen (1988) classified .01 as a small effect size, .06 as a medium effect and .14 as a large effect size (1988). For item #25, the effect size is 0.035 which would be considered quite small. Therefore, while the mean score of executive women and executive men on #25 differs to a significant degree, the proportion of the variance which can be explained by gender alone is small.

**Summary**

This research examined the frequency of leadership behaviors from the Leadership Practices Inventory, in order to answer research question #1 which asks, Are there significant differences in the leadership practices of executive women and executive men. A leadership assessment distributed online was completed by 476 individuals, for a response rate of 24.75%. The scores for the 5 practices of exemplary leadership of the sample of 320 executives were lower than the norms reported by Kouzes & Posner (2011) by an average of 4.53 points.
After using the Bonferroni corrected alpha method to account for multiple tests, the alpha level was adjusted from .05 to .0017 and one of the 30 leadership behaviors was found to be significantly different between female and male executives. Women executives reported demonstrating leadership behavior #25, finds ways to celebrate the accomplishments of others, more frequently than executive men. There were no significant differences reported by gender for the remaining 29 leadership behaviors or the five practices of exemplary leadership.
CHAPTER V
ANALYSIS OF QUALITATIVE DATA

Chapter four answered research question #1, which asked, Are there significant differences in the leadership behaviors of executive women and executive men. The quantitative survey data identified one leadership behavior that women executives reported demonstrating more frequently than male executives to a significant degree. Conversely, 29 of the 30 leadership behaviors, 97% of the overall data, were not reported to be significantly different between male executives. If males and females are so alike, why are there not more females in executive level positions?

To find out more about the leadership experiences of executive level women, the researcher conducted a series of 12 interviews with both executive women and executive men. As is appropriate with the grounded theory method of research, there was no pre-formulated question determined during this process (Glaser, 1978). Instead, the interviews were conducted from the perspective of simply wanting to know more about women executives and their experiences, in order to help those in the field of executive education to better understand how to help develop women leaders for executive level positions. Ultimately, from the stories told and the perspectives shared by female and male executives alike, answers to the question, What leadership skills must women possess in order to be successful in executive level roles? emerged from the data.
Organization of Data Analysis

By its very nature, grounded theory research is an inductive process, which first makes observations of the data, then interprets that data into codes, which are then grouped with other similar or like codes to form concepts which then become broad groups of similar concepts called categories and ultimately theories which explain and interpret the subject of the study (Glaser, 1978). It starts from the bottom up with observations, which lead to patterns, the development of hypotheses and ultimately theories, unlike a deductive approach which moves general to specific and is used in research that starts with a theory and then creates a hypothesis, makes observations and provides confirmation (Trochim, 2000). By contrast to the inductive grounded theory method used in developing this data, this chapter is structured deductively, first presenting an overview of the theories, followed by additional details, explanations and references to individual interviews. This format is intended to increase readability and improve understanding for the reader.

Answering Research Question #2

In order to better understand how individuals and organizations can help women develop the leadership skills that they need in an executive level role, this chapter aims to answer the second research question, What leadership skills must women possess in order to be successful in executive level roles.

Instrument

As discussed in chapter three, the researcher serves as the instrument in grounded theory research (Lincoln & Guba, 1985; Merriam, 2002). The researcher conducted a
series of interviews with current and former executives, allowing for the themes and categories to emerge from the data (Glaser & Strauss, 1967). The researcher as human instrument is a smart, adaptable, flexible instrument (Lincoln & Guba, 1985). “The human instrument allows data to be collected and analyzed in an interactive process (Erlandson, Harris, Skipper & Allen, 1993, p. 39).

Merriam (2002) wrote that researcher as human instrument is valuable in research as it encourages the generation of usable data, particularly for the group that is being studied. “This encourages an understanding of the phenomenon from the participant’s perspectives versus the outsiders” (Merriam, 2002, p. 6). “It promoted the development of theoretical accounts and explanations which conform closely to the situations being observed, so that the theory is likely to be intelligible to, and usable by, those in the situations studied” (Turner, 1981, p. 226-227)

Participants

A total of 12 people were interviewed, including ten females and two males. All but one of the participants held senior executive level positions at the time of the interview (one was recently retired). In order to maintain anonymity of the participant, any information, such as name, employer, or specific job title (such as chief executive officer, chief operating officer, etc) that might allow a reader to identify the individual was changed. Instead, the descriptors used in the reporting of the demographic data in chapter IV, such as organizational rank or type of organization, are used in the reporting of this data.
**Kimberly.** Kimberly is a c-level executive at a non-profit healthcare organization, where she has worked for her entire 30 year career. She reported that began working in this company as a student and was hired right out of college. She has held a number of different positions and was promoted last year to an even more senior position. She shared that she is married and has no children but is now raising her 11 year old nephew. She is the oldest of seven children. She stated that her background is in technology and operations, which is different than many of her health care colleagues who began their careers in nursing.

**Jacqueline.** Jacqueline began her career in nursing, before going back to school, earning a MBA and moving into a management position. She said that she sees her background in nursing as important in her current position, as the relevant experience as a health care provider allows her to bond quickly with physicians, nurses and other health care provider because their shared, practical experience. She reported that she is married and is the mother of twin boys and said that quality child care has been an essential part of her success. Jacqueline was a c-level executive at a non-profit health care organization at the time of the interview and has since been promoted into a senior executive position at their parent company.

**Caroline.** Caroline is a c-level executive at a corporate-health care company that she founded. She reported that the company now employs more than 1000 people and continues to grow. She believes that the company’s employees and their culture have been keys to their success. She is married and has no children. However, she reports that she is the very proud aunt of a recent college graduate whom she helped through college.
Teresa. As a c-level executive at a corporate-manufacturing company, Teresa reported that she faces many challenges. She is running a family-owned company while also raising three young daughters. She described how she and her husband together decided to have him stay home to raise their children while they are young while she works in this executive level role. She said that she has an engineering degree and a MBA and has worked in male dominated organizations throughout her career. She reported that her favorite pastime is coaching youth sports and attending Zumba classes with her daughters.

Kelly. Kelly is a vice president of a corporate-manufacturing organization. She shared that she has had several roles at this company, most recently overseeing the customer service and sales operations and helping the company through a significant financial challenge. She said that she is not married and does not have any children. Kelly talked about working long hours, but carves out time for rest and recovery at the end of projects. She said she is passionate about horses and has two horses of her own.

Cynthia. Cynthia is a c-level executive at a corporate-service organization. She described her passion for technology and solving problems and described herself as always seeking out new challenges. She said that she views herself as having always been a high achiever and started off on the fast-track early in her career, before tiring of corporate politics and quitting her job abruptly. She said this experience gave her the confidence to know she could survive any kind of challenge, which helped to propel her forward in her career. She recently completed a corporate restructuring and reported that she is anxious for the next challenge.
**Adam.** Adam is a c-level executive at a corporate-health care company. He has worked in several large corporations throughout his career, primarily in human resource roles. He reported that his greatest professional challenge arose when a female boss assigned him to manage a customer operations division based upon his potential, and not experience. He expressed that he still appreciates this boss’s faith in him. Adam stated that he is married and has three adult children.

**Michael.** Michael retired several years ago as a c-level executive at a corporate-service organization where he spent more than 30 years. He reported that at the time of his retirement, he had more women executives on his senior leadership team than men. Michael said that he believes that he has always demanded the same level of performance from his employees, regardless of their gender. Michael stated that he is married, has two adult children and described himself as an avid golfer and community volunteer.

**Kathy.** Kathy is a vice president of a non-profit-government organization, an organization that she joined five years ago. Kathy reported that she works long hours, including evenings and most weekends. Kathy expressed passion for her work and for mentoring younger women in her organization. She shared that she is married and has two adult children.

**Joyce.** Joyce recently retired as a c-level executive at a corporate-service organization, as the result of a corporate acquisition and restructuring. She reports that she now works as a consultant and travels extensively. She is married and has no children, but has adult step-children. Joyce said she spent much of her career working for
the same company. She credited her experiences in team sports with helping her to
develop her work ethic, and her ability to develop a strong team.

**Victoria.** This participant was a vice president at a corporate-other company until
recently, overseeing a large global division of the company. She reported that she is
married and her husband works part-time so that one of them is at home to raise their
three teenagers. She talked about her husband needing to remind her of the names of her
neighbors since she is never at home. Victoria stated that she is passionate about her
family and devotes her time away from work to her husband and children.

**Molly.** Molly reported that she is a married mother of two and is a vice president
at a corporate-health care organization. She worked for several large, Fortune 100
companies before relocating to Dayton for her husband’s job several years ago. She said
she has a background in corporate finance and operations and has been an entrepreneur.
Molly also reported recently making a job change to a larger corporation, a change she
attributed to needing employment stability.

**Analysis of data**

Ten themes emerged from the data to describe and explain the leadership
behaviors women executives believed are essential to their success in an executive level
position. They are:

- Develop self awareness. Women executives must have a strong sense of self
  awareness and understand their strengths and abilities as a leader and
  manager.
• Get results. Women executives must get results, be ambitious and be high achievers. However, as much as women executives value getting results, they are not willing to do so at any cost. They are keenly aware of the importance of leveraging their relationships with people in order to get results.

• Value relationships. Women executives need to value their relationships with the people around them, including their boss, their peers, the people who work for them, their customers and their families.

• Recognize and reward performance. Women executives need to look for opportunities to recognize people for their successes, and be eager to help others develop.

• Foster collaboration. Women executives should have a collaborative, shared approach to leadership. They should solicit input from others and share credit for results.

• Take risks. Women executives need to demonstrate confidence and independence and a willingness to take risks.

• Be resilient. Women executives need to be adaptable, flexible and willing to take no for an answer, the first time.

• Learn to assimilate. Women executives must learn to behave like “one of the boys” (Jacqueline) at time when it is necessary and assimilate into male dominated groups, without sacrificing their own sense of self.

• Value lifelong learning. Women executives should recognize the importance of continuing to develop their skills and help others do the same.
• Find balance. Women executives need to find balance in their personal and professional lives, whatever form that means for them individually.

Findings

The ten themes that emerged from the data can be explained more fully.

Develop self awareness. Women executives report that women must have a strong sense of self awareness and understand their strengths and abilities as a leader and manager. When asked by the researcher about their strengths and weaknesses as a leader, the women could speak easily and reflectively about themselves. They understand who they are, what their best leadership abilities are, and how and where they fit into their organization as well. Executive level men may possess a strong sense of self-awareness as well, but perhaps not as clear or as deep a sense as women do. Adam, a male executive who spoke in a complimentary way about the women executives who he has worked for and with, said “I think a male finds it very difficult to say that they’re not good at something...where I think ... because of the difficulties that females have rising up to senior levels, they’ve got to be aware of...what’s not working and be much more willing to fine tune those areas that are not...coming across well. I think it’s... a survival tactic.” (Adam).

Jacqueline recognized that there are areas where she has not had a lot of development. She worked in the same organization for many years, and shared an insight that she had discovered which she referred to as a “late a-ha” (Jacqueline). “If you are getting the results that you need to achieve, nobody is going to question your abilities. If you work for someone who has a particular leadership style, you are likely not going to
get a lot of feedback on things that are similar or complimentary to that person’s leadership style. It may take a careful amount of reflection to discern where you need to grown and improve if you aren’t getting that feedback from others” (Jacqueline). That insight alone demonstrated the depth of self-awareness possessed by many of these women executives.

Another aspect of self-awareness often shared was the alignment these women executives found between their own core values and their work. This theme emerged throughout the interviews as most of the executive women could speak at length about only their leadership abilities, but about their own personal philosophy of leadership and how their work ties into their own values and purpose. “I have a lot of room to grow here. I’m attached to this and I have a personal stake in this and I want to see us get to the other side, whatever that means” (Cynthia). “I want to do something that’s more impactful to the world at large, or the little world within where I live that helps people achieve their best” (Cynthia).

The alignment between the women executive’s personal values and the values and culture of the organizations where they work clearly ignited a level of passion expressed for their work. “I have to choose very carefully what I involve myself in because I don’t go 50%. I go 150%. I’m all in” (Teresa). Kathy shared that she has passion for the work, but also for the people she works with and the customers that they serve (Kathy). This same message was conveyed by many of the others, who not only felt passionate about their work, but also felt a sense of responsibility for helping others be passionate too. Teresa said that it’s “not HR’s role to make people passionate” (Teresa). “I’m the
one that has to make people passionate” (Teresa). Clearly, some women executives have a very strong emotional connection to their work and are aware of that.

**Get results.** Women executives reported that they need to get results, and that they are ambitious and are high achievers. Both executive women and executive men emphasized the need to get results. Repeatedly, the interviewees used language like “the bottom line means everything” (Victoria), “you exceed the goal, you don’t just meet the goal” (Kathy) and “winning is the ultimate prize” (Michael). Without the ability to repeatedly accomplish goals and get results, they would not even be considered as a candidate for an executive level position. When asked about the similarities between executive women and executive men, Michael also thought women executives possess that same results focused orientation as their male colleagues. He said “I think today...the standards are the same.” “I don’t care if they’re male or female. When they work with me and for me, it didn’t make any difference. I demanded the same from everybody” (Michael). Kimberly agreed. “Sometimes I think it’s difficult for us to see how our style is that much different than anybody else doing the same thing” (Kimberly). Men and women both agreed that the standards for performance and expectation to get results were present regardless of gender.

The interviewees recognized that there are certain traits and leadership behaviors that help leaders rise to the top of organizations, regardless of their gender. All executives, regardless of gender, share leadership behaviors such as “being driven and focused and ambitious and wanting to get things done.” (Teresa). However, many of the
women recognized that they have been successful because of the balanced approach they take to getting results while still maintaining strong relationships with others.

Cynthia told a story about the women leaders she worked with in the early stages of her career who demonstrated a much more authoritative, “bossy” approach to leadership than she was comfortable with. “I think that gets things done in a certain time frame, but I don’t know if that’s sustainable. I could do that, but that’s certainly not my style” (Cynthia). Caroline admitted that at times, she can be even more “hard charging in terms of getting results than the men,” but that she is also more open and more team oriented (Caroline). “Relationships are key to getting the job done” said Molly.

Those interviewed cited example after example of the importance of leveraging and maintaining relationships with people while still getting results. “Treating every person that I’m working for or working with as a customer and actually serving them, versus, you know, even as you move up the ladder, expecting them to serve you” (Adam). Kathy said she likes to approach the way she treats the people she works with the way she would her family “cause I’m with people that are here more than I am uh, my my own family. But yet, I expect a lot from them in terms of uh, making sure their job is done, making sure they, I guess meet all their goals.” (Kathy). While getting results is important, maintaining strong relationships with the people they work with is important to these executives too.

Value relationships. Women executives value their relationships with the people around them, including their boss, their peers, the people who work for them, their customers and their families. The interviewees told numerous stories demonstrating the
importance of their relationships with others and the level of importance they placed on caring for people. “You know, 30 years ago, there wasn’t a lot of discussion of personal life, and family, and children, and things like that because there were virtually no women in the workplace” (Victoria).

The women executives reported that want to build relationships with the people the work with and the people they work for, and they want to know that they are making a difference in people’s lives. Said Cynthia,

This is gonna sound a little cheesy, but when you’re in this, so this is where my father’s advice comes to play, when you’re in this microcosm of business, it’s there to make money for shareholders, squeeze more profit out. So, if you think of those responsibilities in a business, those are okay and those are real. But then, if you think about your ability within that to shape what individuals do every day, and whether they’re playing their strengths, and whether they’re delivering value to the business, and whether a department or group or project team is, is motivated and having impact, then you can start to feel like you’re having some impact on people’s lives um, their growth uh, and then the business folks, you know, within, within the company that you’re working on. So, that’s where I align what I do every day with what I really care about as a person.

The women executives reported that they see a difference in how they build relationships with other people in the workplace compared with how their male colleagues relate to others.
Said Teresa, a woman who works in manufacturing, when “women spend time and network together, we know everything about each other. The guys can just go out and play golf and come back in and they still don’t know what a guy’s kids names are” (Teresa). One of the male executives shared a similar perspective. “Not to be sexist but there’s just a natural ability for females to be able to nurture better than males. And, I think that comes through in being a little more personal and building relationships better than many of their male counterparts” (Adam). Teresa said that the women executives she works with spend more time focusing on developing relationships, which contributes to their success.

Some of the male, my male counterparts have, I do see them not going to that involvement, or not getting the buy-in and just saying, “Let’s do it.” But then, their changes don’t last and can be seen as the flavor of the week, the idea of the day, um, whereas if you take the time to get that involvement you can usually have more sustainable product that comes out of it that um, is meaningful and, and uh gets the job done at the same time.

The value that the women executives placed on relationships is reflected in how talked about interacting with people. “I think that women are uh, much more aware that you have to um, that it’s best if people are brought along instead of demand that they participate” said Molly. Women executives said that they give a tremendous amount of thought to how they communicate with others, compared to their male colleagues. “We communicate differently” said Caroline. “That’s probably a different approach; really developing relationships at a personal level” said Teresa. Many described their level of
interest in getting to know the people they work with and the amount of time they spend communicating with people as important to their success. Jacqueline said

A lot of the people I work with ... want to show that sensitivity, and you don’t want to stifle that, and you don’t ever want to be ashamed of it. I’m very comfortable with that, and I don’t think a lot of me, at least in my experience here, are.

Jacqueline said she is

very comfortable with the logical and the factual. And, I think you need to do that, but the logical and the factual is not why people get up every day. They get up because of the emotional and passion for what they do. And so, if you can blend that, I think, it’s incredibly powerful.

In speaking about the importance she places on the relationships that she develops with the people she works with, Kathy said “I’ve had people say ‘I’m working for you. I’m not working for the organization.’ Wow! That’s powerful.”

Not only has the level of importance placed on relationships impacted the success of women in the workplace, but it has also benefitted males as well, reported Adam. He suggested that the increased presence of women in executive roles has enhanced the workplace for him and encouraged him to be a better leader. By watching the women around them model behavior that values relationships, men have learned to become more expressive and more caring and more concerned for people (Adam). He said that it was not that they did not care about people before when the work environment was male dominated, but that his female colleagues helped make it more acceptable for everyone to
express concern people. Said Adam, typically “there’s this kind of macho stereotype that you almost have to try to live up to.” He continued, saying “when I look at bosses that I had 20, 25 years ago compared...to male bosses I have today, I think there’s a big difference. Men are much more comfortable in showing their feelings, talking about themselves, developing relationships, versus...the way it was when I first started working.” “Part of that may be just because there’s more females in the workplace and...it’s become more of a natural thing that when I first started working.” (Adam).

**Recognize and reward performance.** Another theory that emerged from the data was importance of recognizing performance and rewarding people for their work. This supports the previous results from the LPI data in chapter four, which found that women executives demonstrated leadership behavior #25, find ways to celebrate accomplishments, more frequently than men to a significant degree. The qualitative interview data supports this finding as the women executives expressed an interest in rewarding and recognizing other people for their contributions.

Several of the interviewees discussed how women leaders were much more likely than men to reward and recognize others. “I just think that women are a little bit more sensitive to those aspects (than) male bosses” said Adam. He thought that some males might be afraid that they would be viewed as “soft” or “wimpy” if they recognize people the way women leaders do. “It’s just not culturally as acceptable” he said (Adam).

Michael said “I think that’s the biggest thing, I think, that is lacking in CEO’s is their lack of recognition that this isn’t about them. It’s about their people.”
Caroline shared an example of the importance of employee recognition. She encouraged a male employee to show his employees some appreciation and recognize their work on a project that was especially meaningful to the organization and required a the people in his department to demonstrate significant effort. “Of course, he turned it over to his assistant to plan it, but he did it nonetheless. (He) carried it off. ...Next time, hopefully, it’ll be his idea” (Caroline).

Cynthia said that recognizing employees is not always easy, but it is very important to their success of their company, especially during challenging economic times (Cynthia).

We’re havin’ tough times, you know, as a company and then within this broader economy. Um, you can’t reward people the same way we wanted to reward people in the past, you know, and, and you have to get, you have to dig deep and be creative to find ways to really touch people’s core to keep ‘em motivated and, and interested in a time when monetary reward and the threat of, you know, another potential layoff is, is looming. It’s extremely challenging.

Women executives also place a high degree of importance on giving people feedback on their performance. In speaking of her interest in providing feedback to her employees, Caroline said “I want to give it as a way of helping them, but there are some that absolutely don’t want it and they just sort of give you this blank look” (Caroline). She said she often has a difficult time giving feedback to her male employees, relative to the females. “Few men want unsolicited advice, and that’s hard when you’re the boss” (Caroline). Her experience has been that men are also less comfortable giving feedback
to their employees than the women leaders that she has worked with during her career. She recalled specifically one of the men that she worked with. “That was one of his ... weaknesses.”

As far as he was concerned everyone was a star performer, and it was a huge struggle for me to really push him ... to deal with the issues. Once he did it, and saw the positive impact it can have, then ... it’s gotten easier. But, it was getting him to take that first step. ... It wasn’t a comfortable process for me personally. Um, you know, we had some very heated exchanges over it.

One way that women executives prefer to recognize people who demonstrate a high level of performance is to help them develop new skills and face new challenges so that they can become even better. Many of the interviewees referred to their own developmental experiences that enabled them to grow and advance into new roles. More frequently though, they recalled examples where they placed a high level of importance on helping others to develop. Helping others to grow in their jobs and develop new skills was not just a nice thing to do, but it was important to the success of their organization and it’s an important part of their job. “I get paid to, to develop a great team around me” (Victoria).

“I think everyone should always be learning and, and looking ahead, so um, on all of the reviews and, and the goals we’re setting for this year, I challenge the people...where can you, you know, uh develop yourself?” (Teresa). She acknowledged that it is not easy to encourage people to take their self-development seriously.
It is difficult in a manufacturing environment, especially if you’ve got the kind of people who have the old school mentality of ‘my supervisor’s supposed to spoon feed me everything I do here’ to say, you know, ‘no, ask yourself what you can do better about situations’. You know, we can’t fix other people. We can only work on ourselves, so take a look at that situation and see what is there about it that you could do better, that you can contribute, that you could, and, and if along the way you happen to share that knowledge with somebody else and they get it to, super. Despite sitting in a c-level executive’s chair, Caroline recognizes that developing the skills of their managers is essential to the overall success of her company.

At the manager level, they’re on the front line. You know, their job is harder in my opinion. Um, the closer you are, you know, to the front line, to the, you know, the everyday employee, I think their job is much harder. That’s why we focused on our manager team lead level first in terms of leadership development thinking. They’re the most critical.

Caroline discussed several training and development programs that her company created for their group of managers. “They just come out, you know, just totally inspired, and you know, really bolstered with, with, I think, information that they need to really be effective in their job, and, uh, they love it.” (Caroline). She also said “I mean, it’s fun to be, you know, strategic and visioning, but putting that into action is what it’s all about.”

Adam suggested that the women leaders he worked with had career experiences that helped recognize the importance of tackling new challenges. “I find that females who’ve gotten into senior levels have had, again, to work very hard...and, um, because of
that, I think, recognize how important it is to, to stretch, to stretch yourself in your current job, to, to be put it, you know, get out of your comfort zone.” (Adam).

He recalled a former boss who had a number of different jobs in her career. She sought him out for job in a different part of their company, one that he had little experience with. He said he was nervous about taking the job, but that his former boss had confidence in his abilities that he failed to have in his own (Adam). He had been working in human resources and was put into a job deploying technologies into their call centers. “I didn’t even know how to spell call center when I went into that job” (Adam). “She had confidence in me, even though I didn’t have the requisite skills, but, you know, I think ...she realized ‘hey, it’s important for you to grow” (Adam). “I think ...male bosses would be less willing to do that. They’d want to have people who (inaudible) have done it before.” (Adam).

Kelly talked animatedly about several of her employees and clearly found a sense of pride in helping them have new experiences and develop new skills. “They’re just progressing. They’re learning. They’re broadening” Kelly said. When discussing one employee in particular, she said “she was in customer service, she spent some time in logistics, she went and spent six months down at our ... mill” (Kelly).

As far as solving problems and presenting solutions to the customer – she knows so much that she can pull all that together very quickly, and customers love that. Of course, she loves havin’ that kind of breadth and depth and, she’s fun. She’s been one of our fastest rising stars.
**Foster collaboration.** Women executives need to create an environment where people can collaborate, share ideas and are willing to put their egos aside for the sake of the greater good. Kelly said

I think that our leadership styles are probably a bit more collaborative, more acknowledging of the other person’s idea, and then facilitative of maybe a solution that involves multiple ideas. Where, I’d say, some of our male leadership styles are a little more, um, aggressive, a little more, ‘This is my idea. Let me tell you why this makes sense’ and a little less on the collaborative side. Although they can’t be completely command and control or they wouldn’t work in this environment.

Other women executives agreed. “I think that women are far more patient and um, deliberate in um, making sure that the various stakeholders or constituent groups are brought along” (Molly). “Patience is really key, and the ability to be a consensus builder” she said. Teresa said “I’m probably more collaborative.”

This shared, collaborative approach to leadership enables women executives to be more adaptable and willing to change to accommodate to the styles of others. Caroline recalled a time when she was working with an all male board and she would think “they’re looking at me really funny, like they’re not understanding a thing I’m saying.” Her response was to make sure that she adjusted her communication style to make sure that they understood. She intentionally spoke in shorter, complete sentences, and did not shortcut what she was saying, using a more direct approach. “I have to adapt” Caroline said.
According to several informants, one reason why women might be more collaborating than their male colleagues is due to differences between male and female ego (Kathy, Victoria, Caroline). This subject came up in multiple interviews (Kathy, Victoria, Caroline). “I don’t think women, in general ... have as much ego as men do” said Kathy. Caroline agreed. “I think males tend to be more dominating and more demanding, I think, than, I think, I think females tend to be more understanding and more caring” (Caroline).

Victoria agreed. She said

I’m probably more collaborative. Um, you know, women and men, ugh, these are, these sound like sweeping generalization kind of things, but women and men have different ego structures. There’s no doubt about it. An, um, you know, I I think that uh, the ego structure of a woman tends to bring out more participative, collaborative uh more of a social kind of approach to things, um, where a man, the male ego structure and the way they’re socialized, at least in my generation, you know.

I think that, you know, uh, you know, men tend to, many men that I’ve come into contact within my, in my career, and again, I think it’s a generational thing as well, have tended to be very autocratic.

In mentioning the differences between the egos of women, Kathy said “They tend not to have that ego that men do. So, you don’t have to worry about, as an executive, I don’t have to worry about stroking a woman’s ego but I would a male, you know” (Kathy). She talked about a previous boss who was not open and encouraging of the
people who worked for him and always wanted to be in the spotlight. “It was all about (him). It was all about (him). So when there would be community meetings and things, he would always take the lead. We would never be asked to serve in that leadership capacity” (Kathy). He would not share the leadership responsibility with anyone on their team. Kathy is now leading a high profile, highly visible and highly political community project. “That would not have happened if I was still working for (him) (Kathy).

Some of the interviewees recognized that there are times where they clearly do not get credit for an idea or that they are ignored, but the presence of a different kind of female ego enables them to tolerate it. “I’ve been in meetings and I have made points, and I’m pretty articulate, and I mean, I can speak well and I can make points, and ten minutes later another male colleague will make the same point and say ‘oh that. Yea. Absolutely. Great.’ I’m thinking ‘what just happened here? What just happened (laughter) here?’ I don’t think that sometimes they’re attuned.” (Joyce)

While collaboration and shared leadership are valuable leadership practices, several interviewees made careful mention that collaboration could sometimes be time consuming and that it could sometimes hinder results. “It’s my job to make hard decisions. Um, it’s my job to get the input of people who are going to be affected by those decisions. So, I, I’m not autocratic in that way. However, when it comes time to make a decision, we make a decision and we move on, you know, whether it’s a popular one or not.” (Victoria).

**Take risks.** A number of interviewees cited confidence and a willingness to take risks as being important to their success and their willingness to lead the way. “It takes a
mature person to believe in themselves” (Michael). “I think early on in our careers there’s a tendency...to try to please everybody because we think that’s how we get ahead.” (Michael) It’s this kind of maturity and confidence that develops when one becomes truly self-aware. “I really believe that’s where leaders begin to separate themselves” (Michael).

Both males and females reported that individuals need to not only get results, but also to demonstrate confidence in their abilities. Participants emphasized the importance of possessing confidence in their abilities, whether they received that validation from others on the outside or not. “I always joked a little bit that in the formative years of my ...management (career), I learned more about what not to do from the people around me...than what to do.” (Teresa). “That being said, I think I did also learn, being young and being around women who...had a decade more experience than I did, learn a little...about...using your authority and having some swagger and some confidence.” (Teresa).

Cynthia also cited risk taking as an important ingredient in her success as a leader. I’ll take personal risk. I really don’t care. If, if I really believe something needs to be said, or it’s the right thing to do, I will find a way to raise it. Um, but at that same time, I think an ability to know your audience, to, to understand other people’s perspectives, and to have a little diplomacy in how you bring those issues up.

Perhaps the successes experienced as a result of risk taking generate the level of confidence one needs to pave the way in an organization. “It’s probably a reflection of
them taking risks themselves and seeing the benefit, being able to get to the levels that they did, and as a result, be more comfortable with risk taking” (Adam). The interviewees spoke often of embracing change and facing challenges with enthusiasm, especially during times of uncertainty when others might be tempted to just lay low (Cynthia).

“Given the number of downsizings we’ve had to incur, there’s a tendency for people to want to go off the radar because they’re concerned” (Cynthia). Cynthia viewed herself as a change agent in their company and was working hard to encourage people to take more risks, and be more forward thinking. She said

In times like this, the worst thing you can do is hunker down and get off the radar. If you’re not on the radar, you’re not havin’ impact. Pop up. Make a decision. Make a mistake. We’ll dust you off, put you, put you back in the game. But don’t settle and don’t, you know, go south and do nothing.

Adam agreed that women executives are more likely to be take risks and challenge the process.

The females that I’ve worked for were greater risk takers than un, many of the male bosses I’ve had. Um, and I think the, ‘cause the male bosses kind of moved into kind of just, gradually moved into the role. ... They didn’t have to prove themselves that hard, as hard, and didn’t have to take probably some of the risks that many of the female, you know, maybe my female bosses did. And so, as a result, they’re just, they were more comfortable with that.
Jacqueline started her career as a nurse. She said she always knew that if her career in administration derailed for some reason, she could go back into nursing (Jacqueline). “I’ve never been worried about losing my job, or, so I am comfortable even telling people higher than myself what I think verses what I think they want to hear.” She also had a husband who had a good job and they knew they could live off of just his salary if they needed to.

I’ve seen some people in leadership roles who maybe were concerned about their jobs, especially in a down market and whatnot. So, for me it’s been a real advantage um, not to have that concern. I guess, you know, before I was married I could have always just gone back to being a nurse; that was my undergrad. So, it’s not like I ever thought I couldn’t work. And um, now my husband actually makes more money than I do, so um, it’s, it’s kind of good to have that security. It gives you a tremendous amount of freedom.

**Be resilient.** In addition to competence, confidence and risk taking, success in an executive level role also requires “guts,” according to the women interviewed (Jacqueline, Jacqueline, Caroline, Teresa, Kelly, Kathy, Joyce). The women interviewed faced a variety of challenges in their lives, often during formative years, during their childhood or during the early stages of their careers, and yet managed to overcome those obstacles and still become successful. Most every woman interviewed discussed one or more significant challenges that they overcame on their way to the executive office (Kimberly, Jacqueline, Caroline, Cynthia, Kathy, etc). “You know, I had to learn the
hard way. Make mistakes. Fall on your face. Get up, and (laughter) and keep, keep at it, I guess” (Caroline).

Some of the obstacles the women faced were in the workplace. Others faced challenges starting from a very young age at home. “I had, uh, probably what you would call un, a terrible childhood” (Kathy). “I’ve spent my whole life being um, trying to gain people’s acceptance, and love, and attention, and, so that’s probably a lot of why I am the way I am now” (Kathy). “It was just survival of the fittest growin up, and, it was, you survived and you went and got a job. And that’s what I did. I always worked hard at it” (Kathy). This was just one story that demonstrated the resilience of executive women.

Victoria told of similar experiences. At 16 years old, she asked her dad for five dollars. He said he did not have it. “At that point, he was like, ‘Look. Just go work.’ You know, ‘Just, just go work and get a job and quit askin’ me for money.” (Victoria). So she did. She credits him for helping her to develop a work ethic.

He was an ex-marine. Um, blue collar worker with a real appreciation for capitalism and making money. Um, didn’t tolerate a lot of um, uh, didn’t tolerate a lot of uh, uncourageous behavior. So, you know, they, he, he valued, you know, stepping up, making the decision, working hard. You know, I developed his work ethic. Uh, he died, he ended up, you know, he, he worked up to six weeks before he died.

Cynthia also demonstrated resilience when she derailed early in her career. She was a top performer as a young professional at a technology company. “I was afforded some great opportunities and climbed the, the ladder relative, relatively quickly”
(Cynthia). She found herself in a good position in her company, “getting up high enough to where things get done and people in relationships and personalities, politics come to play” (Cynthia).

It got to where I was spending a higher percentage of my time worrying about what other people were doing, looking over my shoulder. It was really getting very cut throat and nasty. And, my value system was starting to get misaligned with the value system of the company. So, I left.

Cynthia went from being on the corporate fast track to not having a job. She spent the next three years consulting and helping someone else run a business, while she focused on re-evaluating her value system and her career path. Finally she said to herself “You know, I’m not done yet. I can find, you know, my strengths are really in organization where big enterprise thinking is, is useful uh, driving changes is something that needs to occur on a broad scale.” Um, so I said, “You know what? I’m gonna go out there and find a company that my values align with.” (Cynthia, p. 4).

Caroline started off as a nurse before she launched her own company. She too said that it was not always an easy linear path to the top. “In the early days it was very bumpy. And, you know um, it’s uh, it still amazes me that we actually got the company started uh, considering all the obstacles that we had to confront early, and still do” “I had to learn the hard way. Make mistakes. Fall on your face. Get up and keep, keep at it I guess.”

Many of these women were pioneers, assuming leadership roles at times when there may not have been many women in the workforce, much less in senior or executive
level positions. Cynthia works in technology, a traditionally male dominated field.

Kimberly, Caroline and Jacqueline began their careers in entry level roles in health care and rose to the executive ranks. Kimberly reported being surprised to realize that there was only one woman in an executive position other than chief nursing officer in her entire hospital system. She said she could not believe that an industry that is predominately female is run predominantly by men. “Healthcare’s changing, but I think it is um, it’s it still has a ways to go” (Kimberly).

**Learn to assimilate.** Another leadership behavior that women executives reported as important to their success was the ability to fit in and adapt to their surroundings, whether that meant they adopted a leadership style similar to those (mostly males) around them, they adjusted aspects of their personality that were different than their male colleagues, or they just learned how to behave more like their male colleagues. “For a long time, I’ve been sort of one of the guys. That was part of my success” (Jacqueline). They learned to be “one of the guys” in order to fit in.

While these women executives recognized the need to adapt and change to fit in to the existing and often male dominated group, that does not mean that it does not take its toll. Said Jacqueline,

I look around and most of the meetings I am, I’m in, it’s me and, you know, six guys that, and I’ve worked with them for years and they know me, and we’re very comfortable, and I know them. Um, but, on occasion I, it’s just, yeah, it, it can be frustrating because uh, uh, I think sometimes there can be like an unintended, that it’s sort of a boy’s club, and, I, it, sometimes I grow weary.
Sometimes the women were welcomed into this “boys club”. Other times, they were not. Joyce recalled a time when their company was preparing to host a golf outing and retirement celebration for their male executives. They realized that an important customer meeting was scheduled for the same day. She described the conversation with one of her male colleagues.

‘I don’t know _____. There are gonna be a number of people who probably aren’t gonna be here.’ I said, ‘This must be the golf outing for _____. And, uh, and he said, ‘Well, yeah.’ I said, ‘Well, that’s okay.’ I said, ‘The, the women will be running the company that day.’ He said, ‘Well, what else is new?’

While the comment was said jokingly at the time, the point was clear. The male executives expected their female colleagues attend the customer meeting and “run the company” while they played golf. There were times where women included and treated equally and there were times where they were not. Joyce and her colleagues knew this and tolerated it. It was expected.

Many of the others recalled similar stories and situations, although they were not complaining. Victoria said,

I think you also get to the point, and I will kid around with my, you know, the guys that I’m close to. You know, my colleagues. You know, and I’ll tell ‘em, ‘Hey! You know, if you think I consider it fun to go out with a bunch of you guys and sit around and listen to stupid football stories and other kind of crap – no thanks. I’d just as soon go do something different.’ You know, and you get comfortable enough you can speak your own mind.
While many of the women executives cited examples of times where they felt different, their ability to fit in and just focus on their work was important to their success. Both the men and women executives interviewed said sometimes they just did not see any differences. “Sometimes I think it’s difficult for us to see how our style is that much different than anybody else doing the same thing” (Kimberly).

Many of the informants addressed the need to sometimes flex their leadership style and use a more authoritarian leadership style than what might be natural to them. “There were a lot of females around me early on that embraced that...authoritative, bossy approach...I think that gets things done in a certain time frame, but I don’t know if that’s sustainable...I could do that, (but) that’s certainly not my style” (Teresa). Caroline said it would be a mistake however to think that women executives are not capable of using an authoritative leadership style when necessary. She believed that at times, she could be even more hard-charging than the male executives around her (Caroline).

Value lifelong learning. Both executive women and executive men cited the importance of lifelong learning to the development of executive level leadership abilities. Many expressed that it was important for them to continue to learn, and also to help their employees continue to learn and develop new skills. Said Teresa,

You know, men either come to the job with their background or they have these great educations. They get advancement. They learn OTJ. But, in terms of, of my experience, I’ve probably had more women read the publications, read the newsletters um, belong to professional groups.

She continued by saying
I think everyone should always be learning and, and looking ahead, so um, on all the reviews and, and the goals were setting for this year, I challenge the people, again, a couple, couple of classes. And, even if it’s not um, you know, something that you’re deficient in, you just want to get better at. You know, what really interests you. Where can you, you know, uh, develop yourself? Um, and so that’s part of everyone’s development plan.

Lifelong learning is an important strategic business move for some. Kelly believed that it takes five years to develop a really effective customer service professional in her organization, so she begins to help them develop as soon as they arrive to their businesses. Caroline made significant investments in the training and development of their organization’s employees, from developing the technical skills of their professional and supervisory staff, through the development of a leadership development curriculum for their director level. There was interest among all of the leaders in helping others to grow and develop the skills they need to be successful in their jobs. Speaking about the training program for their front line employees, Caroline said “I think their job is the hardest. I mean, it’s fun to be, you know, strategic and visioning, um, but putting that into action is really what it’s all about” (Caroline).

One element in lifelong learning and employee development that they executives cited as essential is feedback from other’s regarding their performance. “Without strong feedback, without good mentoring, I think people struggle” (Michael). Joyce said that feedback from others was important to her. She believed that she is a strategic, visionary leader and focuses much of her energy on creating a future for their company. She relies
on others to give her feedback on her performance as well as inform her about the daily operations of their company (Joyce). She has a number of colleagues who are very good communicators and help her in this regard.

One in particular ...who, we’ve known each other 30 years, and he, he’s not, you know, intimated or fearful about his position in life or his job. He could, you know, and he’s got great communication skills, and he’ll come in here probably once every other couple of weeks, you know, “Here’s what’s goin’ on out here. And, here’s some, reading the tea leaves, and, and so forth.” So, he’s a good uh, good back channel, good feedback loop.

Not only did the executives seek feedback from others on their job performance, but they also rely on mentoring and coaching from others to aide in their development as leaders. “The only person you can work on is yourself” said Teresa. ”I would say 80% of any executive level job are, you know, skills that are transferable from other, you know, high level jobs. And, un, it just uh, knowing uh, what you have to emphasize, you know, in the new job and always having a thirst to learn” (Adam). A coach or mentor can help a leader navigate the complexities of the organization and their role. Caroline is a CEO, and yet still seeks the advice and guidance of a coach. “I’ve got my coach, who’s very experienced, and um, so that’s really helped me. It’s helped me a lot actually. So, you’re never, I guess the lesson learned there is you’re never too old, um, or long in your career um, um, to consider something new” (Caroline).

**Find balance.** Women executives must find balance in their lives, although the interpretation of balance is relatively personal and may vary from one person to the next.
Executive level jobs are very demanding (Kimberly, Jacqueline, Adam). Some of these executives have traveled extensively for their jobs. All or most put in long hours. Jacqueline said that the job “is very demanding physically.”

In some cases, executive women and executive men cited facing similar challenges when it comes to work/life balance issues. One of the male executives stated that “I think this whole role of parenthood and life/work balance are issues that people want to make more of a gender issue...I think it’s true for all of us” (Michael). The women however, were much more likely to have varied family and social support systems (Kimberly, Caroline, Joyce). Some of the women had no children (Kimberly, Caroline, Joyce, Kelly) while others waited until they were older to have families (Jacqueline). For most, however, finding balance was a struggle that was dependent upon a very strong support system.

Victoria and Teresa both had husbands who either did not work while their children were young, or worked flexible work schedule so that at least one parent was at home. Others cited the importance of good child care as essential to their ability to balance both work and family lives (Jacqueline). Overwhelmingly however, the men and women agreed that the increase in women in the workplace benefited both genders when it came to flexibility and work/life balance. Teresa said

I think bringing women into the workplace really made it kind of okay for men to show how much they valued their children, and their families, and their lives, and things like that, because if became common place to have that kind of discussion in...the workplace.
Michael also believed that the workplace has evolved to where now more men are more comfortable expressing their concern for their families than in the past. “I used to kick guys out of the office and ...say, ‘go coach your kid, ‘cause let me tell you...(in) seven years that kid ain’t gonna be here” (Michael). Whatever the makeup of their work/life/social situation was, the executives agreed that finding a way to make it all work and have support structures in place was important. Said Michael,

I think you gotta make sure that you work in the right circumstance, that people are gonna give you the freedom and flexibility to do both. And then, nobody gets cheated. ‘Cause the worst thing that can happen is the company gets cheated or the child gets cheated.

Summary

From the data collected during interviews with ten female and two male executives, ten theories emerged, as is traditional in the grounded theory method of qualitative research. Data were recorded, transcribed and coded using the constant comparative method, until codes generated categories, categories became themes, and themes evolved into ten theories. Ultimately, both the executive women and executive men agreed that women’s way of leading brought many positive qualities to the workplace.

In answer to the research question, What leadership skills must women possess in order to be successful in executive level roles?, ten theories emerged from the data. By utilizing the findings of this research, executive education professionals can design curricula to help current or aspiring women executives develop the leadership skills
women executives believe must be demonstrated to be successful in an executive level role. At the same time, leveraging both theory and practice in executive education will enable institutions of higher education to lessen the gap identified by critics and create greater value for students of executive education and the organizations that sponsor them.
CHAPTER VI
SUMMARY, CONCLUSIONS AND IMPLICATIONS

Introduction

This final chapter reviews the statement of the problem and summarizes the study and the findings for both research questions. It also reports the researcher’s conclusions and the implications of the study, and makes recommendations for future related research.

Statement of the problem

As higher education faces the challenge of identifying new sources of revenue for the institution beyond traditional undergraduate tuition, it becomes necessary to develop a stronger understanding of the needs of potential markets. A Bersin and Associates report estimated that in 2011, U.S. corporations spent more than $67 billion on training for their employees (O’Leonard, 2012). The opportunity for higher education to penetrate that market is immense, but assumes that the professionals that lead those initiatives have the expertise necessary to meet the needs of the marketplace.

Given that 58.6% of the workforce in 2010 was made up of women and that women are still underrepresented in the executive ranks today, it seems pertinent to learn more about the similarities and differences between executive women and executive men, as well as the leadership skills women need to develop to be successful in executive level
roles (U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics, 2011). Both the corporations that employ these professionals and rely on them to get results, and the institutions of higher education who look to provide support and training to them, can benefit from the outcomes of this study.

**Summary of the study**

A total of 1923 leaders from small, medium and large corporate, not for profit, manufacturing, service, health care, government and educational organizations in a metropolitan area in the Midwest were invited to complete an online Leadership Practices Inventory (LPI) assessment and brief demographic questionnaire. From that group of leaders, 476 individuals completed and submitted their responses, for a total response rate of 24.75%. The sample was reduced in size to the 320 participants who indicated that they currently held the position of director or equivalent (manager of managers), vice president or equivalent, senior executive or equivalent, c-level executive (chief executive officer, chief financial officer, chief information officer, etc). The data were analyzed using various descriptive and inferential statistics. The one-way, between groups analysis of variance was conducted to analyze the data. This helped to answer the first research question, which asked, Are there significant differences in the leadership behaviors of executive women and executive men?

In order to learn more about how women executives viewed their leadership experiences, and the leadership skills they attributed to their success in executive level roles, twelve in-depth, face to face, follow up interviews were conducted by the researcher beginning with c-level executives who volunteered through the online survey. Research question #2 asked, What leadership skills must women possess in order to be
successful in executive level role. Ten of the executives interviewed were women and two were men. Seven of the interview participants held c-level (chief executive officer, chief financial officer, chief information officer, etc) positions, while three were senior executives (senior vice presidents, etc) and two were vice presidents. Utilizing the researcher as the instrument, the interviews were recorded, transcribed, and shared with the participant as member checks, which helps to improve the accuracy and credibility of the data (Lincoln & Guba, 1985). The transcripts were then coded using open, axial and selective coding, in order to create categories and themes and allow for theories to emerge from the data. Memos, field notes and journals were also used in this study to record insights and observations and then coded. The date were constantly compared to previous data, as is typical in grounded theory data analysis. Ultimately, after 12 interviews, the interviews failed to generate new data, reaching saturation.

Findings

The data analysis of the quantitative data from the first portion of this study showed that one out of the 30 items on the LPI were found to be significantly different between executive women and executive men. Women executives reported using of the leadership behavior #25, finds ways to celebrate accomplishments, more frequently than the men executives to a significant degree. Twenty nine of the 30 leadership behaviors (3%) showed no significant difference by gender in frequency of use.

From the in-depth interviews, ten themes, or leadership skills that women need to possess in order to be successful in an executive level role ultimately emerged. They were develop self awareness, get results, value relationships, recognize and reward
performance, foster collaboration, take risks, be resilient, learn to assimilate, value
lifelong learning, and find balance.

Conclusions and implications

The following conclusions can be drawn as a result of this research.

Research question #1. The first research question asked, Are there significant
differences in the leadership behaviors of executive women and executive men. After
correcting the alpha level to control for the familywise error rate, the results showed that
the 29 of the 30 (97%) of the 320 executives’ responses to the Leadership Practices
Inventory (LPI) were not significantly different based upon gender. One of the 30
leadership behaviors was reportedly practiced more frequently by female executives than
male executives to a significant degree.

It is important that current or aspiring women executives recognize that there are
some trends, however small. While only one of the 30 leadership behaviors was
reportedly practiced more frequently by women than men, there were two others that had
means that were close to being significantly different by gender and therefore worthy of
further study (#27 speaks with conviction about the meaning of work and #29 ensures
that people grow in their jobs). As reported in chapter four, the effect size of the means
difference for #25 finds ways to celebrate accomplishments, was relatively small (0.035).
Therefore, the proportion of the variance accounted for by gender alone is relatively
small. While it is not possible to determine from the one-way ANOVA results, additional
analysis with two or more independent variables, such as gender and organizational rank
or type of organization, might prove to be interesting research and provide additional insights into the source of the differences.

Despite the small effect size, knowing that there are some differences is helpful information for women leaders to have, particularly those who are in an executive level position or aspire to be there at some point in their career. For the most part, the frequency of demonstrated leadership behaviors is generally the same regardless of gender. Women in this study reported feeling like they were “one of the guys” (Jacqueline) and that they generally fit in. Sometimes however, it’s not that easy. “Sometimes I grow weary” (Jacqueline). Knowing that, regardless of whether they are one of a few women leaders on a team of mostly men, or otherwise, 97% of the leadership skills women need to demonstrate to be successful in an executive role are the same as their male colleagues.

**Research question #2.** Based upon the data generated in the interviews with ten female and two male executives, the following leadership skills have been identified as important to women’s success in executive level roles.

- Develop self awareness
- Get results
- Value relationships
- Recognize and reward performance
- Foster collaboration
- Take risks
- Be resilient
Learn to assimilate
Value lifelong learning
Find balance

These items can serve as good advice for anyone aspiring to an executive position to follow, regardless of gender. This should be reassuring to the next generation of leaders, as the path to the executive suite requires specific leadership skills that can be taught or developed. The findings of this research can help executive education professionals bridge the gap between theory and practice. Leveraging both research and application can strengthen the field of executive education will also helping address the needs of executives and the organizations that sponsor their participation in executive education programs.

Other conclusions

Surprisingly, in more than 12 hours of interviews and nearly 300 pages of interview data, very little was mentioned about the glass ceiling. The term “glass ceiling” was only mentioned three times, and the term “barrier” was only mentioned twice. This group of women, and the men that worked closely with them, did not recognize barriers to advancement into the executive ranks.

On the other hand, nearly all of the participants interviewed addressed concerns about work life balance, even the men. Each of these women had a different family situation. Some had children while others did not. Most were married. At least two had husbands who stayed at home with their children. Despite their different family situations, all of these women found a way to make it work, although not necessarily the
same way. They were intentional about the life choices that they made in pursuit of a balance between personal and professional lives.

**Impact on leadership theory**

In addition to applying the findings of this research to the business and leadership development, this study can contribute to strengthening the knowledge base of leadership theory. As discussed earlier in the review of literature, researchers have sought a greater understanding of leadership for more than half a century (Bass, 1981; Burns, 1978; Fiedler, 1964; Kouzes & Posner, 1987; Stodgill, 1948). Stogdill (1948, 1974) looked for personality traits that make one person more likely to lead versus another which were classified as leadership trait theories. Tannenbaum and Schmidt (1958) and Blake and Mouton (1964) generated leadership behavioral theories meant to describe good leadership. Fiedler (1964, 1967) and Hersey and Blanchard (1969) identified leadership theories that were contingent upon a particular situation or the environment in which one is operating, which are included in leadership contingency theories. Burns (1978), Bass (1981), Bennis and Nanus (1985), Tichy and Devanna (1986), Kouzes and Posner (1987) and others generated transformational leadership theories that focused on the leaders ability to engage and inspire change in the follower, by using their personality, traits and leadership abilities to encourage the follower to want to change and move forward.

van Maurik (2001) suggested that leadership research doesn’t always fall into one particular category of leadership theory. The findings of this study align with contingency theory as it examines the leadership behaviors of women who are operating in a specific environment – the executive level of an organization. This research also
aligns with transformational theory, in that the Leadership Practices Inventory utilized in this study is based on a transformational leadership model, but also because the themes that emerged from the interview data are also much more transformational than transactional in nature, two concepts that Burns reported as mutually exclusively (Burns, 1978).

The findings of this study also contribute to research on leadership and gender. By determining that women executive use just one of 30 leadership behaviors significantly more frequently than men, this research supports previous studies that found minimal or no differences in the leadership behaviors of men and women (Eagly & Johnson, 1990; Fenn, 1978; Kanter, 1977; Payne, Fuqua, & Canegami, 1998). Kanter’s proportionate diversity model in particular is relative to the findings in this study. Kanter’s model suggested that power and the accumulation of power were key to leadership and advancement and that the structure of the organization was a greater predictor of leadership success than gender (Kanter, 1977). Minority groups (i.e. women) face fewer barriers and have greater influence over the culture in organizations that are more proportionately diverse and where the minority group represents a minimum of 40 percent of the workforce (Kanter, 1977). Essentially, the greater the percentage of women in an organization, the greater the likelihood that women advance into leadership positions. Knowing that several of the women executives included in this research worked in organizations with traditionally high proportions of women (health care and non-profits), future research could examine the percentage of women in the total organization relative to the percentage of women in the executive ranks to determine if a
relationship exists. Using Kanter’s proportionate diversity model, the larger the percentage of women in the organization, the larger the percentage of women in executive roles should be. Future study could consider this.

Other research on women and leadership in organizations found that women and men are socialized similarly (Eagly and Johnson, 1990; Fenn, 1978; Payne, Fuqua, & Canegami, 1998). While this study did not explore the socialization process of women executives, both the quantitative and qualitative results showed far more similarities between women and men executives than differences. Future research could seek to better understand what the organizations with a higher representation of women in their executive ranks are doing to identify and socialize women leaders in the organization. Perhaps it is the social structures of the organization, rather than individual similarities and differences, which are greater predictors of advancement and success for women leaders than individual leadership skill development.

The additional ANOVA data showing the mean differences between women executives and women managers identified twice as many significant differences between women executives and women managers than were present between women executives and executive men. Perhaps this is a result of the socialization that occurs as one accumulates experience in the organization and/or advances? Future examination and study could examine this premise.

In addition to a contribution to leadership theory and organizational theory, this research has the potential of contributing to diversity theory. Shore et al (2009)’s research found that people often judge each other based upon easily recognizable
differences, like race and gender, and that these judgments often lead to negative impacts on the minority group, resulting from placement in the “in-group” or “out-group” (p. 118). Rather than focusing on what makes men and women similar or different in executive level roles, perhaps future study could focus on what factors contributed to the advancement and success of men and women into executive level positions. This would eliminate a perceived preference for the leadership style of either men or women and instead create a more positive or neutral perspective from which to study.

Burns suggested that there needed to be a change in the leadership paradigm, and that it should be based upon a unified foundation of knowledge widely accepted from leadership scholars from various fields (1978). Rather than focusing on leadership within the context of specific environments or industries or demographic groups, the generation of a widely accepted and applicable theory of leadership effectiveness for most groups in most situations, will provide the boundaries for the new paradigm than Kuhn (1962) and Burns (1978) were seeking. Perhaps the new paradigm can be generated by leadership theory that focuses on creating positive organizational structures that maximizes the leadership effectiveness of all individuals and the organization, instead of marginalized or underrepresented groups. The leadership skills needed to be successful that were identified in this research have the potential to generate a shift to a new paradigm of leadership. Further study should be continued to validate these skills to test generalizeability, but these findings show promise.
Emerging questions

Looking ahead to the future of the workforce, as women who were born after the passing of Title IX enter the midpoint of their careers, will they face similar or new challenges? This group of women have likely benefitted from educational and workforce policies on equity. As the large baby boomer generation retires, and Generation X, which is smaller in numbers, takes the reins, will the opportunities for women in the executive levels of organizations increase?

How can we take this knowledge of both the key similarities and differences and the critical leadership skills women need to be successful in executive level roles and educate employers, human resources, and executive education professionals to use this information to help develop the next generation of women executives? Similarly, how can this information be transferred internally into institutions of higher education to develop better policies and practices relating to the development of both academic and professional women? Ideally, this information could be used to help identify individuals with both the interest and inclination or aspirations of leadership roles and help them develop the skills they need along the way. How can we change the culture of our own institutions to focus on development of leaders, specifically women leaders?

Recommendations for future research

In addition to this study’s focus on the independent variable of gender, future research may want to analyze multiple variables to see if the combination of these variables cause a main or interactive effect on the dependent variables of the leadership behaviors and leadership practices. In order to more deeply understand the leadership
behaviors of women executives, this researcher elected to do some additional analysis using organizational rank as a categorical variable. From the initial sample of 476 respondents, the researcher reduced the sample down to just the 138 women. From that, the organizational rank was reorganized so that all executives (directors, vice presidents, senior executives and c-level executives) were in the “executive” variable, and the other three groups (middle managers, first level supervisors and individual contributors or specialists) became a second “manager” variable. Using a one-way between groups ANOVA, the researcher identified six variables that warrant a closer look. Two were significantly different between women executives and women managers after the alpha level was corrected using the Bonferroni method. This is twice as many significant differences as was found between women executives and the male executives. The significant results can be found in Table 17.

Table 17

*Analysis of Variance: Women Executives and Women Managers*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Leadership Behavior</th>
<th>SS</th>
<th>df</th>
<th>MS</th>
<th>F</th>
<th>Sig</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Around Organizational Wn Groups</td>
<td>290.069</td>
<td>137</td>
<td>2.133</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Values</td>
<td>310.036</td>
<td>138</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>27. Speaks With Bn Groups</td>
<td>38.452</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>38.452</td>
<td>16.082</td>
<td>.000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Conviction About Wn Groups</td>
<td>325.171</td>
<td>137</td>
<td>2.391</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Meaning of Work Total</td>
<td>363.623</td>
<td>138</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Other comparisons generated results that were not significant after the Bonferroni correction, but would have been had the alpha level remained at .05. Three behaviors, #13 searches outside the organization for innovative ways to improve, #22 paints a big
picture of group aspirations, and #26 is clear about own philosophy of leadership, were significantly different between women executive and women managers without a corrected alpha. Also, one of the five practices, challenge the process, showed significant mean differences at the .05 level, but not when the alpha is corrected. These findings might be of value to current and aspiring women executives, corporations and executive education professionals and are likely worth consideration for future research.

This leads to another suggestion for future research. How similar or different are women executives from women managers? Given that the women executives from this study were only significantly different from male executives in their frequency of use of one leadership behavior, and yet they were significantly different from women managers on two variables, do certain women rise to the ranks of the executive level because they are more like their male colleagues than other women? Similarly, do some women advance into the executive ranks because they are just different than other women managers? Questions like these are worthy of additional exploration in future research.

Given the findings discovered in the additional ANOVA analysis with gender and rank as the variables, future research might involve interviewing more women managers and women executives to determine the similarities and differences between them. Are there only slight differences between the leadership skills of executive women and executive men because those women that advance into those executive level positions are more like their male colleagues? Would it benefit women managers aspiring to executive level roles to mirror the leadership styles of their male colleagues and become more like them?
This study included individuals from more than 40 companies in varied industries in order to get a broad based representation of executive leaders. Future research could also focus on specific industries or specific types of organizations. For example, nonprofit organizations might be different than corporations which might be different than healthcare. This study was intentionally broad-based so as to gain information that could be widely applied, which was important for women and men in a variety of professions and industries.

For future research, it might also be interesting to interview what can be described as “talent managers”- professionals who work in leadership development, organizational development, or human resources, to find out more about their perspective on both the similarities and differences between the executive women and executive men in their organization, as well as the leadership skills that they observe their women executives demonstrating. It might also be interesting to ask about the leadership development opportunities that their organizations have created with women leaders in mind.

It is also interesting to consider that the frequency of use of each of the leadership behaviors were based upon the individuals own self-perceptions and not those of others. If the Leadership Practices Inventory assessment was administered as a 360-degree assessment, which factors in the perspectives of one’s boss, peers, direct reports and others, would the frequency of use of each of the 30 leadership behaviors change? Do the women executives really “find ways to celebrate accomplishments” more than men, or do they perhaps feel as though they are culturally expected to and therefore rate themselves as doing so more frequently than men? Are some of the leadership behaviors
rated higher by women because that is their own perception? Does that align with what others see as well? Is their self-perception skewed based upon expectations? Do cultural influences have any influence on how women view themselves as leaders? These questions might make for some interesting future research.

Conclusion

The findings from this research have the potential to inform leadership scholars, women executives and organizational development professionals, as well as contribute to the field of leadership studies and executive education. By leveraging practical yet rigorous research, gap between research informed by practice and practice enhanced by relevant research can be narrowed, benefitting both business education and business professionals. Organizations looking to develop a diverse workforce that leverages the leadership abilities of men and women alike, now have research based data that can be used to help women professionals develop the leadership skills they will need to be effective as they advance throughout their careers. By learning from the experiences of women in executive level positions, aspiring women executives can develop the skills needed to be successful in executive level roles and “follow her lead.”
REFERENCES


APPENDIX A

INITIAL EMAIL TO SURVEY PARTICIPANTS

Subject: YOUR INPUT REQUESTED: Research on Senior-level Leaders in the Dayton Region

We are about to embark on a study of the leadership practices of senior-level leaders in the Dayton Region. The study, supported by both UD’s Center for Leadership & Executive Development and the Dayton Development Coalition, will focus on better understanding the leadership practices of those holding senior-level leadership positions (managers of managers and above) in organizations based in and around the Dayton Region. All area professionals are invited to participate. The intent of this research is to better understand the leadership capacity of the Dayton Region, in order to further leverage our collective strengths in our leadership & economic development efforts.

Below is a link to a brief online survey, which asks you to indicate the frequency with which you use 30 leadership practices in your work environment. There are also 6 brief demographic questions. The survey should take 15 minutes or less to complete. Please be assured that all responses will remain anonymous and only group information will be reported. We ask that you complete the survey by no later than Jan. 10th.

If you have any questions, or would like further information about this research, please do not hesitate to contact Lisa Beutel at 937.229.2665 or beutel@udayton.edu. Also, if you know of other senior-level leaders who may be willing to participate, please either indicate their email addresses at the end of the survey, email those to me at the above address, or ask them to contact Lisa directly, and we will send them their own unique link to this survey.

Thank you for helping to develop strong leaders in the Dayton Region and beyond. Happy Holidays!

Click here to complete the survey:
http://sbasurvey.udayton.edu/phpsurveyor/index.php?sid=17&token=0917487765
APPENDIX B

FOLLOW UP EMAIL TO SURVEY PARTICIPANTS

Subject: REMINDER: SURVEY DEADLINE JAN. 10th: Research on Senior-level Leaders in the Dayton Region

We are about to embark on a study of the leadership practices of senior-level leaders in the Dayton Region. The study, supported by both UD’s Center for Leadership & Executive Development and the Dayton Development Coalition, will focus on better understanding the leadership practices of those holding senior-level leadership positions (managers of managers and above) in organizations based in and around the Dayton Region. All area professionals are invited to participate. The intent of this research is to better understand the leadership capacity of the Dayton Region, in order to further leverage our collective strengths in our leadership & economic development efforts.

Below is a link to a brief online survey, which asks you to indicate the frequency with which you use 30 leadership practices in your work environment. There are also 6 brief demographic questions. The survey should take 15 minutes or less to complete. Please be assured that all responses will remain anonymous and only group information will be reported. We ask that you complete the survey by no later than Jan. 10th.

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Thank you for helping to develop strong leaders in the Dayton Region and beyond. Happy Holidays!

Pete Luongo
University of Dayton Center for Leadership & Executive Development
Executive Director

J.P. Nauseef
Dayton Development Coalition
Chief Executive Officer
APPENDIX C

IRB LETTER OF INFORMED CONSENT – ONLINE SURVEY

Project Title: Leadership Characteristics of Business Leaders

Investigator: Lisa Beutel, UD Center for Leadership & Executive Development

Purpose of Research: to better understand the leadership practices of business executives

Expected Duration of Study: The study should be completed before the end of 2008

Procedure: Simply complete the following questions and submit online by Jan. 1, 2008

Alternative Procedures: No alternative procedures exist in this research project. However, participation in this study is voluntary.

Anticipated Risks and / or Discomfort: There are no anticipated risks associated with this study. All responses will be kept confidential and no names will be used in the reporting of the data.

Benefits to the Participant: By participating in this research, you will be providing information that will help business leaders better understand the leadership practices of area executives, information which will then be used to help develop the next generation of leaders in the Dayton region.

Confidentiality: No records of your participation in this research will be disclosed to others. Your data will be pooled with data from other research participants and only summary results will be made public. Your name will not be revealed in any document resulting from this research. Your data will be recorded anonymously. Only a randomly assigned identification number will be recorded with your data; your name or other identification will not be recorded with the data.

Contact Person for Questions or Problems: If a research-related injury occurs, or if you have questions about the research, contact Lisa Beutel, University of Dayton, 300 College Park, Dayton, OH 45419-1220, 937.229.2665, or beutel@udayton.edu. Questions about the rights of the subject should be addressed to Jon Nieberding, Chair of the Committee for the Protection of Human Subjects, Kettering Labs Room 542, +0104, 229-4053.
**Consent to Participate:** I have voluntarily decided to participate in this research project. The investigator named above has adequately answered all questions that I have about this research, the procedures involved, and my participation. I understand that the investigator named above will be available to answer any questions about experimental procedures throughout this research. I also understand that I may refuse to participate or voluntarily terminate my participation in this research at any time without penalty or loss of benefits to which I am entitled. The investigator may also terminate my participation in this research if she feels this to be in my best interest. In addition, I certify that I am 18 (eighteen) years of age or older.

__ Yes, I agree to participate in this study __

Name of Respondent ___________________________ Date ____________

SUBMIT
On the next page are thirty statements describing various leadership behaviors. Please read each carefully. Then look at the rating scale and decide how frequently you engage in the behavior described.

Here’s the rating scale that you’ll be using:

1 = Almost Never 6 = Sometimes
2 = Rarely 7 = Fairly Often
3 = Seldom 8 = Usually
4 = Once in a While 9 = Very Frequently
5 = Occasionally 10 = Almost Always

In selecting each response, please be realistic about the extent to which you actually engage in the behaviors. Do not answer in terms of how you would like to or in terms of what you should be doing. Answer in terms of how you typically behave on most days, on most projects, and with most people. For each statement, decide on a rating and record the corresponding number to the left of them statement. Every question must be answered or the entire survey will be invalid.

To what extent do you engage in the following behaviors? Choose the number that best applies to each statement and record it in the blank to the left of the statement.

___ 1. I set a personal example of what I expect of others
___ 2. I talk about future trends that will influence how our work gets done.
___ 3. I seek out challenging opportunities that test my own skills and abilities.
___ 4. I develop cooperative relationships among the people I work with.
___ 5. I praise people for a job well done.
___ 6. I spend time and energy making certain that the people I work with adhere to the principles and standards we have agreed on.
___ 7. I describe a compelling image of what our future could be like.
___ 8. I challenge people to try out new and innovative ways to do their work.
___ 9. I actively listen to diverse points of view.
___ 10. I make it a point to let people know about my confidence in their abilities.
11. I follow through on the promises and commitments that I make.
12. I appeal to others to share an exciting dreams of the future.
13. I search outside the formal boundaries of my organization for innovative ways to improve what we do.
14. I treat others with dignity and respect.
15. I make sure that people are creatively rewarded for their contributions to the success of our projects.
16. I ask for feedback on how my actions affect other people’s performance.
17. I show others how their long-term interests can be realized by enlisting in a common vision.
18. I ask, “What can we learn?” when things don’t go as expected.
19. I support the decisions that people make on their own.
20. I publicly recognize people who exemplify commitment to shared values.
21. I build consensus around a common set of values for running our organization.
22. I paint the “big picture” of what we aspire to accomplish.
23. I make certain that we set achievable goals, make concrete plans, and establish measurable milestones for the projects and programs that we work on.
24. I give people a great deal of freedom and choice in deciding how to do their work.
25. I find ways to celebrate accomplishments.
26. I am clear about my philosophy of leadership.
27. I speak with genuine conviction about the higher meaning and purpose of our work.
28. I experiment and take risks, even when there is a chance of failure.
29. I ensure that people grown in their jobs by learning new skills and developing themselves.
30. I give the members of the team lots of appreciation and support for their contributions.
APPENDIX E

PARTICIPANT DEMOGRAPHIC INFORMATION

Please indicate your responses below:

Gender
   _____ Female
   _____ Male

Number of years of professional experience
   _____ 1-5
   _____ 6-10
   _____ 11-15
   _____ 16-20
   _____ 21-25
   _____ 26-30
   _____ 31-35
   _____ 35-40
   _____ 40 or more

Rank in organization:
   _____ C-level executive (CEO, CFO, CIO, etc)
   _____ Senior executive or equivalent
   _____ Vice President or equivalent
   _____ Director or equivalent (manager of managers)
   _____ Middle manager or equivalent (manager of first level supervisors, Individual contributors or specialists)
   _____ First level supervisor or equivalent (managing individual contributors or specialists)
   _____ Individual contributor, specialist or equivalent
Type of organization
_____ Corporate – Service
_____ Corporate – Manufacturing
_____ Corporate - Health Care
_____ Corporate – Other
_____ Non-Profit – Education
_____ Non-Profit - Government
_____ Non-Profit - Health Care
_____ Non-Profit – Other

Please select one of the following:
_____ Yes, I would be willing to participate in a follow-up interview
_____ No, I am not interested in participating in a follow-up interview at this time

Please contact me via
_____ Phone
_______ Phone number
_____ Email
_______ Email Address

OPTIONAL RESPONSES:
I know of a friend/colleague/peer/other that might be willing to participate in this study.
Please send the survey information to them at the following email addresses (Include as many email addresses as you'd like separated by a comma)

_____________________________________________

Thank You
You have completed answering the questions in this survey.
Click on [submit] now to complete the process and save your answers.
### APPENDIX F

#### CENTRAL TENDENCY STATISTICS OF LEADERSHIP BEHAVIORS: TOTAL EXECUTIVES AND BY GENDER

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Leadership Behavior</th>
<th>Female</th>
<th>n</th>
<th>M</th>
<th>SD</th>
<th>Range</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. Sets A Personal Example Of What Is Expected</td>
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<td>2. Talks About Trends Influencing Our Work</td>
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<td>1.43</td>
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<td>3. Seeks Challenging Opportunities To Test Skills</td>
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<td></td>
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<td>4. Develops Cooperative Relationships</td>
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<tr>
<td>5. Praises People For A Job Well Done</td>
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<td>8.91</td>
<td>1.16</td>
<td>4-10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
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<td>232</td>
<td>8.78</td>
<td>1.21</td>
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<td>1.19</td>
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<td>6. Makes People Adhere To Agreed On Standards</td>
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<td>1.32</td>
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<td>7. Describes A Compelling Image Of The Future</td>
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<td>8. Challenges People To Try New Approaches</td>
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<td>9. Actively Listens To Diverse Points Of View</td>
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<td>10. Expresses Confidence In Peoples Abilities</td>
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<td>Leadership Behavior</td>
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<tr>
<td>11. Follows Through On Promises And Commitments</td>
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<td>Female 88</td>
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<td>12. Appeals To Others To Share Dream Of The Future</td>
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<td>13. Searches Outside The Organization For Innovative Ways To Improve</td>
<td></td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
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<td>Female 88</td>
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<td>14. Treats Others With Dignity And Respect</td>
<td></td>
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<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Female 88</td>
<td>8.83</td>
<td>1.32</td>
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<td>Male 232</td>
<td>7.81</td>
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<td>Total 320</td>
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<td>15. Creatively Rewards People For Their Contributions</td>
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<td>Female 88</td>
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<td>16. Asks For Feedback On How Actions Affects Others Performance</td>
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<td>17. Shows Others How Their Interests Can Be Realized</td>
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<td>18. Asks What Can We Learn</td>
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<td></td>
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<td>Female 88</td>
<td>8.83</td>
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<td>8.34</td>
<td>1.55</td>
<td>3-10</td>
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<td>19. Supports Decisions Other People Make</td>
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### APPENDIX G

**ANALYSIS OF VARIANCE (ANOVA) DATA FOR ALL 30 LEADERSHIP BEHAVIORS FOR TOTAL EXECUTIVES AND BY GENDER**

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<td>27. Speaks With Conviction About Meaning Of Work</td>
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<td>28. Experiments And Takes Risks</td>
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<td>29. Ensures That People Grow In Their Jobs</td>
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Dear ___________.

Several months ago, the UD Center for Leadership & Executive Development launched a research study into the leadership practices of executives in the Dayton region. The study included an online leadership assessment and several demographic questions, and gave survey responses the option of volunteering to participate in a follow-up interview. I appreciate your willingness to volunteer and share your thoughts and information about the leadership practices of our region’s executives, particularly women executives.

This research is not only of value in determining the overall leadership strengths of our region’s executives, but also in helping organization’s understand how to develop the leadership practices of their women leaders.

I would like to schedule 60 minutes, at a time that works best for you (including early morning, evenings and even weekends) with you for a follow-up discussion about your leadership philosophies and practices. Do any of the dates/times listed below work for you?

The attached document outlines the research process, and includes some sample questions that you might want to consider in advance of our leadership discussion. I appreciate your willingness to participate and will be looking forward to our time together.

All the best,

Lisa Beutel
APPENDIX I

INTERVIEW PROCESS

1. Schedule a time to meet (approx. 60 minutes at a location of your choice – your office, on campus at UD, even in the conference room of the Oakwood Starbucks … it’s up to you!)
2. Review sample discussion questions (see below)
3. Meet and engage in our conversation
4. The discussion will be audio recorded using a digital recorder, so that the interview can be transcribed and group data generated
5. Please be assured that all discussions will remain confidential. Pseudonyms will be used in the reporting of any data, and all steps will be taken to ensure confidentiality, in accordance with UD’s Institutional Review Board policies. You are welcome to select your own pseudonym if you’d like and we can even use that name during the interview
6. Data will then be transcribed, coded and tabulated and findings will be reported, in general terms only and without alluding to the identity of individual participants.
APPENDIX J
SAMPLE INTERVIEW QUESTIONS

1. Given what you’ve learned from past leaders, your life purpose, and your core values, what are your beliefs about leading and motivating people?
2. What can people expect from you as a leader?
3. What do you expect of people as a leader?
4. What similarities and differences do you find between your (or other female executives) leadership practices and the male executives in your organization?
5. How do you (and other female executives) find ways to celebrate accomplishments? Yours? Your organizations? Your individual employees? Is this similar/different to your male colleagues? To female managers?
6. How do you (and other female executives) speak with conviction about the meaning of your work? Is this similar/different to your male colleagues? To female managers?
7. How do you (and other female executives) ensure that people grow in their jobs? Is this similar/different to your male colleagues? To female managers?
8. What other similarities and differences do you find between your (or other female executives) leadership practices and those of your male colleagues? From the female managers in your organization?