

12-2012

Women Leading Women: Reinforcing the Glass Ceiling?

Marian A. Suarez

University of the Incarnate Word

Follow this and additional works at: http://athenaeum.uiw.edu/uiw_etds



Part of the [Business Commons](#), and the [Education Commons](#)

Recommended Citation

Suarez, Marian A., "Women Leading Women: Reinforcing the Glass Ceiling?" (2012). *Theses & Dissertations*. 259.
http://athenaeum.uiw.edu/uiw_etds/259

This Dissertation is brought to you for free and open access by The Athenaeum. It has been accepted for inclusion in Theses & Dissertations by an authorized administrator of The Athenaeum. For more information, please contact athenaeum@uiwtx.edu.

WOMEN LEADING WOMEN: REINFORCING THE GLASS CEILING?

A Dissertation

by

Marian A. Suarez, BJ, MA

Presented to the School of Graduate Studies of the
University of the Incarnate Word
in partial fulfillment
of the requirements
for the degree of

DOCTOR OF PHILOSOPHY

University of the Incarnate Word

December 2012

UMI Number: 3534988

All rights reserved

INFORMATION TO ALL USERS

The quality of this reproduction is dependent upon the quality of the copy submitted.

In the unlikely event that the author did not send a complete manuscript and there are missing pages, these will be noted. Also, if material had to be removed, a note will indicate the deletion.

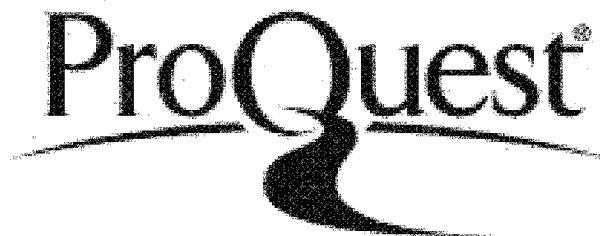


UMI 3534988

Published by ProQuest LLC 2013. Copyright in the Dissertation held by the Author.

Microform Edition © ProQuest LLC.

All rights reserved. This work is protected against
unauthorized copying under Title 17, United States Code.



ProQuest LLC
789 East Eisenhower Parkway
P.O. Box 1346
Ann Arbor, MI 48106-1346

Copyright © 2012

by

Marian A. Suarez

Acknowledgements

This dissertation would not have been possible without the love, support, and encouragement of my family. My parents always told me I could do anything and instilled in me the belief that you finish what you start, a belief that helped me continue this journey even when life got complicated and it would have been easier to walk away.

I also want to thank my Dissertation Committee for their wisdom; always making themselves available to give me feedback and steer me in the right direction. To my Chair, Dr. Dorothy Ettling, I owe a great deal. I know that my need for structure and linear thinking must have been a test of her patience many times, but she stuck with me and, through the combination of our diverse personalities and thinking styles, this study came to life and was much richer for it.

I especially want to thank the women who have supervised me in the various jobs I have had throughout my life. Those experiences are what sparked my interest in this topic.

Abstract

WOMEN LEADING WOMEN: REINFORCING THE GLASS CEILING?

Marian A. Suarez

Dissertation Chair: Dorothy Ettling, Ph.D.
Committee Member: Norman St. Clair, Ph.D.
Committee Member: Absael Antelo, Ph.D.
Committee Member: Jeannie Scott, Ph.D.

University of the Incarnate Word, 2012

This qualitative narrative study explored the experiences of 10 women who worked in Corporate America and reported to female supervisors, and the perceptions they attached to those relationships with regard to their professional growth and career advancement. The main goal of the study was to understand how these women felt their female leaders either helped or hindered their climb up the corporate ladder. The Social Cognitive Theory of Gender Development and the narrative inquiry framework were used to shed light on the experiences reported by the female employees and how their gender and the gender of their supervisors may have played a role in the challenges these women faced in getting ahead. Through interviews, the participants told their stories and explained their expectations of a female leader's role in developing and nurturing their professional growth and, in most cases, their disappointment with the lack of support they felt they received. The study revealed the women's perceptions of why most felt their female leaders were not championing their career advancement. The research also uncovered the participants' specific ideas around the type of relationship they wanted from their female supervisors as well as the kind of development opportunities they felt would be most helpful to their professional growth. The study's finding showed that female leaders need

to examine their behaviors toward female employees and reflect on ways that they could develop and nurture their talent and drive so that more females can ascend into the leadership ranks in Corporate America.

Table of Contents

Chapter 1: Introduction	1
Context of the Study	1
Statement of the Problem	3
Background of the Researcher	4
Purpose of the Study	6
Research Question	6
Theoretical Framework	6
Methodology Overview	8
Definitions	9
Significance of the Study	9
Chapter 2: Review of the Literature	11
Women as Leaders	11
Role of Mentoring	16
Women Working Together	21
Summary	24
Chapter 3: Methodology	26
Research Design	26
Research Participants	27
Research Strategies	28
Protection of Human Subjects	29
Data Collection	29
Data Analysis	31
Role of the Researcher	32

Trustworthiness and Credibility	33
Limitations of the Study	35
Chapter 4: Findings	36
Demographics	37
Participant Narratives	37
Alex	38
Beth	39
Cathy	40
Debbie	42
Emily	44
Frida	45
Gretchen	46
Holly	47
Isis	48
Janice	50
Themes	51
Expectations for themselves and supervisors	51
Tools they need to succeed	55
To do their job	55
To develop professionally and advance their career	56
Relationship with supervisor	60
Feeling of being taken advantage of	60
She likes me, she likes me not	61

Differential treatment	63
Fear of being replaced	64
Chapter 5: Discussion and Conclusion	69
Themes.	69
Expectations for themselves and supervisors	69
Tools they need to succeed	70
Relationship with supervisor	70
Discussion	71
Women as transformational leaders	71
Women as learners	72
Women competing with other women	76
Women opting out of corporate jobs	77
Impact of Socialization	78
Implications	81
Building a relationship and defining goals	84
Assessing personality preferences and strengths	85
Creating development opportunities and assessing readiness	86
Providing ongoing feedback and recognition	87
Recommendations for Further Research	89
Conclusion	90
References	92
Appendix A: Application for Institutional Review Board Approval Form	101
Appendix B: Consent Form	102

List of Tables

Table 1: Demographic Information of Study Participants	37
--	----

List of Figures

Figure 1: Data collection guiding framework	30
---	----

Chapter 1: Introduction

“As nobody can do more mischief to a woman than a woman, so perhaps one might reverse the maxim and nobody can do more good.”

Elizabeth Holland
nineteenth-century writer and salonist

Context of the Study

“You’ve come a long way, Baby.” That slogan for Virginia Slims cigarettes used by the Phillip Morris Company in the late 1960s was designed to target women who were embracing the new feminist movement and featured black and white pictures of an unhappy woman doing house-cleaning chores from the early 1900s juxtaposed against colored pictures of a much happier 1960s woman dressed in stylish clothes. The message to women was that life was so much better now with all of the doors that were open to them. However, the results from a recent study by Catalyst (2011), a nonprofit research and consulting organization, showed that women hold only 3% of the top titles in Fortune 500 companies. This indicates that there may need to be an addendum to that slogan that would say the following: “But you’ve still got a long way to go.”

There is no question that women have made strides in entering the leadership ranks of corporate America with the number of females in middle management rising rapidly in the last two decades (Eagly & Carli, 2003). But this is where the progress seems to have stalled. More than 20 years ago the Wall Street Journal coined the term “glass ceiling” to describe the conditions that keep women from advancing to more senior levels of corporate hierarchy (Townsend, 1997, p. 4). Today research shows that women are still facing a glass ceiling when it comes to leadership positions—from the frontline ranks to the most senior levels, such as Chief Executive Officers (CEOs) or

board members (Pai & Vaidya, 2006). This situation exists at a time when research has shown that female executives can help improve a company's bottom line. Krishnan and Park (2005) showed that companies with a larger percentage of women in their senior executive positions had a stronger financial performance. An article for *HR Magazine* included results from a Catalyst study that found that Fortune 500 companies with the most female corporate officers saw an estimated 35.1% higher return on equity and a 34.0% higher return to shareholders than companies who had fewer female corporate officers (as cited in Pomeroy, 2007). The article, entitled "Cultivating Female Leaders," also commented on the disappointing results stated in the 2007 Catalyst Census of Women Corporate Officers and Top Earners of the Fortune 500, which showed some increase in the number of women in top positions. But the growth rate had slowed dramatically, and the article concluded that "progress has almost come to a standstill" (as cited in Pomeroy, 2007, p. 46). Current research shows that despite the tremendous growth of women in the workforce—46% compared to 54% of the male population—there continues to be an absence of women in the top jobs. According to Bosse and Taylor (2012), only 2.6% of the Fortune 1000 companies have women CEOs.

While reviewing the literature on this topic, the researcher found that a common word seemed to come up frequently—*mentoring*. Mentoring is traditionally defined as a relationship between a junior employee and someone at least two positions above in the organization that provides developmental assistance to the employee (Raabe & Beehr, 2003). In a study of 15 corporate CEOs, Rosser (2005) found that each of the corporate executives credited their rise to the top spot to the people that helped them get there: mentors who coached them and provided them with challenging assignments and mentors

who gave of themselves without expecting anything in return. Ragins and Cotton (1991) found that the problem facing women is that with so few females in senior corporate positions, women employees must many times form a cross-gender relationship with a senior male executive if mentoring is to take place, and the barriers to this kind of relationship are many. Some of the barriers Ragins and Cotton (1991) discussed involve male executives who shy away from offering their mentorship to female employees to avoid office gossip and innuendo. The study also stated that female employees loathe to initiate a mentoring relationship with male executives because they fear creating a negative impression by being thought too aggressive. But there are other alternatives. In more recent years, the concept of mentoring has veered away from the classic model and now includes a relationship that does not require a senior executive's involvement, but it does involve the interaction between a supervisor and their own employee (Raabe & Beehr, 2003).

Statement of the Problem

Since it has been noted that there are now a greater number of women in middle-management or supervisory positions, the opportunity for female employees to have a mentor in a female supervisor is great, yet there has not been much research done about the implications of this dynamic. It is the researcher's belief that this relationship may be affecting the "ceiling" that is preventing more women from climbing the corporate ladder. This study explored the perceptions female corporate employees have about their relationship with female supervisors and how they believe it affects their career advancement.

Background of the Researcher

My first career was in broadcast journalism, which was a field that allowed me to be fairly independent. Although I reported to a male news director, my time was spent mostly in the field, roaming around looking for stories to report. After 12 years in that field, I longed for a job with a little more security and a lot more compensation. I spent 2 years going back to school part-time to achieve a teaching certification in elementary education. In that world, I felt quite independent again. I reported to female principals, but other than a once-a-year appraisal, I was left pretty much to my own devices and was content being in charge of my classroom. It was not until I finished my masters in counseling and left elementary education to become a training consultant, working in several San Antonio corporations, that I became aware of the so-called “glass ceiling.” I knew that there were few female news directors, and I observed that women mainly held the elementary school principal positions and were not as prevalent in high schools. But the idea of women being kept from attaining leadership positions did not truly enter my consciousness until I stepped into the corporate world. Here, I saw how few women held the executive leadership positions, and I became curious. What or who was keeping capable women from rising in the ranks? I started paying closer attention to the women who were in the middle-management ranks to see what they were doing to advance in their careers and also to see how they were helping the females who reported to them to develop professionally. What I saw as a consultant, an outsider working for these organizations, was echoed by what I experienced once I joined a corporation as a full-time employee—women managers concentrating so hard on promoting themselves that the idea of helping a female employee advance was either something that did not occur to

them or, in some cases, was something the female managers actively worked against. This is not to say that I never encountered a female in a supervisory role who provided mentoring or professional development opportunities to their female employees, but for every one that I observed doing this, I could name at least 10 who did not. One of my more memorable female supervisors did not attempt to disguise her desire to keep me in my place. Despite telling me verbally that I was doing the work of three people and that my work product was always excellent, she also told me that if I wanted to advance she did not see any possibilities for me within our corporation and that I would need to look outside the company if I wanted to attain a higher position. She made no effort to look into other departments or divisions to see if there were professional development opportunities for me or to help me develop skills that might allow me to move up. So, when the opportunity presented itself, I did leave the company for a higher-level position.

My experience caused me to wonder if this was simply my skewed perspective or if others had undergone similar experiences. I started bringing up the subject of female supervisors whenever I was in the company of other professional women. What I heard from them in these informal conversations mirrored what my own experience had been. Almost all of these professional women preferred working for a man because they felt that female bosses were either tougher on them, oblivious to their role as a mentor, or they intentionally undermined any chance for promotion that these women had. These conversations, coupled with my own story, led me to wonder if women themselves are not part of the problem, if they indeed are not reinforcing the glass ceiling for other women.

Purpose of the Study

The purpose of this study was to explore the perceptions female employees, working in Corporate America, have about their relationship with female supervisors and how they believe it affects their career advancement.

Research Question

The primary question that guided this study was the following: How do female professionals perceive their female supervisors may impact their career advancement in Corporate America.

Theoretical Framework

This study was grounded in the social cognitive theory of gender-role development (Bussy & Bandura, 1999). The basic idea underlying this theory is that boys and girls are taught to behave in certain ways based on the influences around them. From the time we are babies our families influence our behavior by how they behave themselves. Society's influence can be seen in the behaviors that are reinforced in school, in the media, and so forth. We have learned the acceptable way to act through what Heim and Murphy (2001) call social learning. They asserted that even though rules and limits may vary between families and cultures, there are some conventions that all societies and families feel the need to establish, such as aggression and passivity, dependence and independence, achievement, cooperation and competition. Many studies point to parents as the primary influencer of gender behavior. Heim and Murphy (2001) related the story of one mother who admitted she viewed the behavior of her daughter and son differently.

They stated:

One woman told us that when her daughter orders her friends around, she calls her “Miss Bossy Cow.” When asked what she would call her son if he were to display the same behavior, she blanched and then replied, “A natural-born leader, of course.” (p. 97)

Angier (1999) talked about a study that involved people who saw a videotape of a baby crying and when they were told it was a boy, they described the baby as angry; when they were told it was a girl, they felt she looked scared or sad. She described how adults tend to project their beliefs about gender-specific behavior onto children.

Gender socialization may also be seen in the games children play. Social psychologist Lever (1976) did a series of landmark studies in the 1970s that documented children at play and how each gender’s activities and behavior differed. Lever found that boys played far more competitive sports than the girls did. While boys were comfortable playing on teams where there were obvious hierarchies—star players to bench warmers—many girls chose to play primarily one-on-one games with a best friend, such as playing with dolls. Their play revolved around equality, each making up games and fantasies to act out. While boys were comfortable with the conflict that came with competitive team sports, the girls strove to have friendships and to stay in harmony. In Goodwin and Goodwin’s (1987) study, the findings showed that the social learning that boys were exposed to when playing competitive games taught them how to resolve conflicts. Although, there may have been a lot of arguing during the boys games, Goodwin and Goodwin observed that games did not end because of a fight. However, when girls played together and a squabble broke out, games often came to a screeching halt without anyone trying to resolve the conflict. According to Goodwin and Goodwin (1987), when a girls’ game came to a halt, there were often tears and threats of “not being your friend

anymore,” pouting, and so forth. When the game was over, it was not really over because girls could give the offending player the cold shoulder for up to 6 weeks (p. 282).

These gender-role stereotypes play out in the workplace in interesting ways. Like their behavior when playing games as children, men are more openly aggressive with one another while women tend to show aggression in indirect ways (Heim & Murphy, 2003). In keeping with the expected behaviors of women and men, O’Leary and Ryan (1994) found that women subordinates expected their women bosses to be more understanding, more nurturing, more giving, and more forgiving than men. They further noted that women tend to react to women bosses as women and to men bosses as bosses.

But in order to be seen as leaders in an organization, women must compete with men for managerial positions, and they may do this by displaying what are viewed as masculine characteristics. Gini (2001) argued that women who are the most successful at getting ahead are more ruthless than men:

because they feel they have to prove they can be rough, tough, and resilient. Known as the “only bra in the room syndrome,” characteristics of these types of achievers is their lack of empathy and support of other working women, especially their subordinates. (p. 99)

Whether women view female bosses as a nurturing mentor, a competitive opponent, or something in between, the idea of gender socialization was the theoretical underpinning of this study, which sought to explore female employees’ perceptions of how their relationship with a female supervisor impacts their ability to advance in their careers.

Methodology Overview

An important aspect of this study was hearing the participants’ experiences from their perspective. To do this, the researcher used a narrative research approach so that the women’s own voices were heard. A narrative approach is used when you have people

who have a story to tell, and the researcher is looking to bring those stories to light (Creswell, 2005). According to Marshall and Rossman (2006), narrative research “seeks to describe the meaning of experience for those who frequently are socially marginalized or oppressed, as they construct stories about their lives” (p. 6). The researcher used this methodology as a way to gather information, then she analyzed and interpreted the stories the participants told about their experiences in working for female supervisors. The importance in this approach was not only to capture the words that these women said but also to pay attention to the way in which they conveyed their stories: the tone and emotions connected to their words. Narrative inquiry assumes that people create their reality through the telling of their own story (Marshall & Rossman, 2006). The researcher sought to uncover the meaning these women attached to their experiences through the use of this methodology.

Definitions

In this study, the term *Corporate America* was used to describe the environment in which the study participants work. Corporate America is an informal phrase describing the world of corporations within the United States not under government ownership. It often refers to large-cap, private-sector operations in general and does not necessarily involve businesses that are financial in nature.

Women leaders refers to females who hold middle-management or higher positions in their organizations.

Significance of the Study

This study is important because it examines the relationship between women to see if there might be a connection between this dynamic and the continued existence of

the glass ceiling phenomenon. Since the glass ceiling was first mentioned more than 20 years ago, women's progress toward breaking through that ceiling into the upper echelons of Corporate America has slowed (Catalyst, as cited in Townsend, 1997). There are a number of studies that have looked at this problem but few have explored the relationship between women as a possible influence in the continued existence of this barrier to career advancement.

This study allowed the voices of a group of women, employees with a desire to climb the corporate ladder, to be heard. They told their own stories and made their own assumptions about the impact they felt their female supervisors had on their ability to advance in their careers. This study highlights actions and behaviors on the part of female supervisors toward their female employees that may impact the employees' ability to elevate to higher positions within their organization.

Chapter 2: Review of the Literature

There has been much research done in connection with women in the workplace. But as preparation for this study, the researcher focused on three specific areas of literature: (a) women as leaders, (b) the role that mentoring, or the lack of it, has on the advancement of women in business, and (c) the dynamic between women working together.

Women as Leaders

In looking at women as leaders, the research indicates that some of the things that make women successful in leadership roles may be the very same things that keep more women from being promoted. In their book *In The Company of Women*, Heim and Murphy (2001) studied the socialization of women, beginning with the behaviors that were rewarded as children, such as being nice, and those that earned punishment, such as being physically aggressive. They added that women learned about gender roles from more than just their parents. Everything from nursery rhymes to TV shows reinforced the expectation that females be sweet, kind, and good. Lever (1976) looked at sex differences based on the games children play. She studied 200 fifth graders for 1 year, observing and interviewing them as well as reading their diaries. Lever found that while boys tended to play competitive games outdoors with large groups of players where hierarchies were in place (coaches, team captains, etc.), girls tended to play indoors, preferring to play in pairs, and their games were without direct competition. They were more likely to be found playing hopscotch or jumping rope, games that did not have a specific goal and ended when they decided they were done, not when someone “won.” Both studies concluded that social interaction and building relationships were more important to

females than to males. This focus on relationships was found to be a positive for women who were judged to be more effective leaders than their male counterparts in a study that found females more likely to adopt a collaborative leadership style, to share information, and to involve others in the decision-making process (Murphy, as cited in Heim & Murphy, 2001).

A meta-analysis by Eagly (2007) revealed that female leaders were more transformational in their style than male leaders. This led to significantly higher scores when it came to factors that included things like supportive and encouraging treatment of their direct reports. Eagly concluded that the findings on the effectiveness of the females' leadership style indicate an advantage for women leaders. Yet another advantage for female leaders is that they may be more qualified to be in their position (Baxter & Wright, as cited in Eagly, 2007). Research indicates that women may face some difficulties in getting promoted to upper levels of leadership. If this is true, the thought is that since they must overcome barriers to land those leadership roles, and there is greater scrutiny put on them when being considered for selection, those that do make the cut are highly qualified. Eagly's (2007) meta-analysis also showed that female managers were more effective relative to male managers in middle-level leadership positions. This was attributed to the need at that level for complex interpersonal skills since middle managers are interacting with subordinates as well as superiors. The transformational leadership qualities that were found in women and their emphasis on relationship-building were credited for the females' advantage over their male manager peers.

However, while some research portrays females as nurturers, relationship-builders, supporters, and non-competitors, and note this as an advantage for female

leaders, others have found those qualities to be a distinct disadvantage. Some studies have focused on the socialization of the genders that begins as children. Females who are now in their 30s and 40s were taught as toddlers to be sweet and kind and good: qualities that were reinforced by nursery rhymes, fairy tales, cartoons, TV shows, and so forth. One study of 3-year-olds found that children at that age already believed that girls should never hit and that boys liked to fight (Lever, 1976). Miller stated that the development of a person's identity is tied directly with being female or male, noting that "women's sense of self develops in a context of social connections with others; that is, a woman's sense of self becomes organized around building and maintaining relationships" (as cited in Anderson & Hayes, 1996, p. 11). Miller further noted that women defined themselves in terms of relationships, while men defined themselves by their individual achievements. Lever (1976) concluded that in the female culture, popularity, friendliness, and intimacy were all signs of status; in the male culture, position in the hierarchy was what mattered most. Heim and Murphy's (2001) study of gender differences centered around self-esteem. Their findings suggested that women tended to be harder on themselves than men and lowered their self-esteem by beating themselves up. In cases of interpersonal conflict, the women reported feeling inadequate, which cut into their sense of self. Another area that was highlighted in their study was women's tendency to downplay their achievements and give credit to outside factors, such as effort or luck. Men, on the other hand, tended to credit their own abilities for things that went well and outside factors when things did not go well. These perceptions, Heim and Murphy (2001) concluded, are contagious and may affect how others see the successes and failures of men and women. Rudman (1998) looked at the negative effect of self-promotion on women's reputations.

He examined women who were perceived to act in a way that went against female stereotypical behavior; they were more achievement-focused and less relationship-oriented. He found that whether women were supervisors, subordinates, or peers, they were all perceived to be tougher and more unpleasant to work with when compared with their male counterparts, especially when the work setting was a male-dominated environment.

The socialization that the genders are exposed to from the time they are children may lead to problems for women when they attempt to rise in the workplace or choose a job that is considered masculine (Eagly & Karau, 2002). Barriers come up when a job's demands are perceived to be incompatible with people's expectations about women, and this incompatibility may limit the access females have to these roles. Davison and Burke (2000) revealed that just by having a female's name prevented some women from getting a job. They gave identical resumes to study participants but attached either a male or female name to the materials. They found that men were preferred over women for jobs considered "masculine," such as an auto salesperson and a sales manager for heavy industry, while women beat out men for "feminine" jobs, such as a secretary and a home economics teacher. Interestingly, for gender-neutral jobs, such as a psychologist and a motel desk clerk, men were also preferred over women. Davison and Burke (2000) concluded that men have an advantage in almost all circumstances except for those settings that are seen as feminine.

In 1993, Kanter's sociological study showed that "typical behavior of women in organizations turns out to reflect very universal responses to current organizational situations" (p. 9). Kanter discovered that adults change to fit the system and that

discrimination and hostility emerge because of organizational pressures, not just because of individual prejudice. One of the organizational structures that was discussed was sex-segregation of jobs. According to Kanter, vertical segregation takes place in many workplaces where men often occupy more of the top jobs, while more women fill out the bottom jobs. Even those women who did get promoted did not usually reach the top echelon of the corporation. Kanter suggested that this kind of job segregation reinforced stereotypes about what men and women were capable of doing. When men dominated in a particular position, it was seen as “male” and the characteristics of the job were seen in male terms. When a woman entered one of these male-dominated jobs, they were automatically judged as less capable of doing the job. In addition, Kanter learned that these women had to speak more to get the same amount of attention for their ideas, which led to some of them being called “pushy.” The women also got more negative facial expressions directed at them when they engaged in problem-solving situations. In conclusion, Kanter found that people may see a female leader as bossy and someone with a lesser ability, and the consequences of such biases may lead to male employees being given more formal authority than their female counterparts. Similarly, Mizrahi (2004) found that women in positions of authority who were on an equal level with male peers did not receive the same amount of respect and cooperation from the men and women they supervised. He concluded that female bosses and managers may have to behave in more coercive and controlling ways to get the same amount of work done by their subordinates. Overall, the research on the pros and cons of female leadership show that, though many females are judged to be effective when in leadership positions, society’s expectations around gender roles, the presence of unconscious biases, and segregation

within the workplace all present barriers to women who are trying to attain leadership positions.

Role of Mentoring

Some studies have attributed the dearth of women leaders to the lack of mentoring opportunities afforded to female employees. The concept of mentoring first came up in classic literature. Roberts (1999) stated that the origin of the term mentor dates back to the epic poem “The Odyssey” in which the character Odysseus prepares to leave for the Trojan war by asking his friend, Mentor, to take care of his home and his son while he is away. Interestingly, although the term mentor is usually associated with someone who protects and assists a protégé, according to Roberts, Homer’s Mentor was inadequate. It was actually the goddess Athena who used her gifts of wisdom and compassion to protect both Odysseus and his son. The most commonly accepted modern definition of the term comes from Kram (1985) who explained mentoring as a relationship between a senior, a more experience individual, and a junior, a less experienced individual, where career guidance is given to the protégé. Eby, Butts, Lockwood, and Simon (2004) defined mentoring by discussing the kind of career-related support that a mentor provides which involves “increasing the protégé’s visibility within the organization and providing high quality developmental experiences” (p. 411).

In truth, the advantages of having a mentor in the workplace are many. Eby et al. (2004) found correlations between mentoring and high salaries, career advancement, and career satisfaction. Previous research has shown that mentors are clearly important when it comes to a person’s career advancement (Cavanaugh, 1999; Torrisi-Mokwa, 2006). Mentors are often credited with teaching their protégés (a) the political skills necessary

for promotion within the organization, (b) the importance of learning how to give and receive feedback, and (c) how to build office alliances and manage their reputation (Politics 101, 2006). In Rosser's (2005) study, all 15 male CEOs admitted that mentoring was a key aspect of their development and that they would never have achieved their current position had it not been for the mentors who had helped them learn and develop.

But not all mentoring experiences are positive. Little research has been done, however, on negative mentoring experiences. One such study examined some of the mentor behaviors that contribute to a negative experience for the mentee. Levinson (1978) studied mentoring relationships and found that some protégés described mentoring behaviors as being overly critical, demanding, and, in some cases, actively sabotaging the careers of their mentees. Eby et al. (2004) looked at a number of factors that contributed to a negative mentoring experience. One factor was what they called a "Mismatch within the Dyad," a relationship where the values, work styles, and personality of the mentor do not match those of the protégé (p. 4). A second factor, called "Distancing Behavior," refers to mentors who intentionally keep their protégés from attending important meetings or events as well as mentors who are too concerned with their own career advancement to have time for their protégés (p. 3). The third factor that Eby et al. (2004) examined included "Manipulative Behavior" on the part of the mentor, which includes situations where the mentor inappropriately delegates work to the protégé by giving tasks that are above or below their skill level or where the mentor takes credit for the protégé's work (p. 3). Two more factors that contributed to a negative mentoring experience are a "Lack of Mentor Expertise," which relates to either interpersonal or technical knowledge or ability, and "General Dysfunctionality," a situation where mentors have a negative

attitude either toward the work that they do or the organization as a whole, or they are experiencing personal problems that prevent them from mentoring in a positive way (Eby et al., 2004, p. 3). Eby et al. (2004) concluded that mentoring is not for everyone and that organizations should not force individuals to become mentors.

Another aspect of mentoring that the literature addresses is the differences between formal and informal mentoring. Eby et al. (2004) found a connection between Distancing Behavior and Lack of Mentor Expertise with formal mentoring relationships as opposed to informal mentoring arrangements. Informal mentoring can be described as a relationship between a senior executive and a junior employee where either party approaches the other and strikes up a relationship that is welcomed by both. This differs from the more formal model, which involves a mentor and a mentee who are assigned to each other as part of a formal program within the company. One downside to formal mentoring was noted by Kram (1985) who found that some assigned mentors lack the interpersonal skills necessary to form a developmental relationship. Additionally, she stated that another possible disadvantage of formal mentoring programs is that individuals can feel coerced into participating, which can cause decreased motivation to perform the role of a mentor. Furthermore, Kram (1985) noted that formal programs assume that people can learn to be effective mentors, which, she believes, is not always the case. But informal mentoring relationships are not always positive either. Kram theorized that mentoring relationships are dynamic and changing, with some relationships becoming less satisfying or even destructive over time. Similarly, Ragins, Cotton, and Miller (2000) found that informal mentoring relationships can vary greatly from highly

satisfying to dissatisfying but without naming a particular reason for the differing levels of satisfaction.

Gender also impacts the mentoring experience. Some studies examined the concept of role modeling and stated that the shortage of women in the executive suite translates into a shortage of female role models who would be able to act in a mentoring capacity (Ragins & Cotton, 1991; Wells, 2001). Because of this, women would need to seek out male executives to be their mentors. But there are roadblocks. Studies show that it is easier for men to initiate a relationship with potential mentors of the same gender than it is for women to approach mentors from a different gender. Some of this is attributed to the types of informal opportunities that men use for developing mentoring relationships, such as going out for a beer after work or attending sporting activities. The reason given is not that women could not attend some of these kinds of outings, but it is the perception that women employees socializing with male executives must have sexual undertones would cause females to avoid seeking out this kind of informal contact. There is more potential for innuendo and gossip and that can be a formidable deterrent (Ragins, 1989, 1991).

Other research discusses the impact the mentor's gender has on the mentee's experience. Fowler, Gudmundsson, and O'Gorman (2007) found that the effects of the mentor or mentee's gender is limited to only a few mentoring functions, such as personal and emotional guidance and career development facilitation. In both of these areas, female mentees believed that their female mentors provided greater personal and emotional guidance and more career facilitation than did females with male mentors. With regard to career development, Fowler et al. (2007) credited the increased amount of

literature that focuses on barriers for women as the probable reason why female mentees were provided with more career development facilitation than male mentees.

Other studies show that females do not always make the best mentors. As noted before, there are more women in supervisory and middle-management positions than ever before. Kanter (1993) explained that as a minority group increases in size, members should begin to see their stress levels decrease and their opportunities to demonstrate managerial potential increase. She also noted that as the ratio of women and men in the workplace becomes more balanced, women can become allies and work together to enhance the opportunities for career advancement—a phenomenon known as sisterhood and solidarity behavior.

But it may not be that simple. Mavin (2006a) described solidarity behavior as complex in that it makes the assumption that women are natural allies for each other and that women in senior positions feel a responsibility to do what they can to promote other women into leadership positions. Mavin felt that existing research has chosen to cover up the negative relations that sometimes exist between women in management. In fact, “women are still more likely than men to be disloyal to their same-sex colleagues” (Greer, 1999, p. 319). Mavin (2006b) examined the behaviors and actions required by women to gain entry into the male-dominated senior ranks. She learned that women in the upper levels of management may be expected to act and behave like men, so much so that they disassociate themselves from the female population in order to conform to their male colleagues’ management style. Starr, as cited by Mavin (2006a), presented that senior women as more “male than men” and for “pulling up the ladder” for other women once they have reached senior levels, creating further barriers to keep women in their

place. Starr's findings also imply that competition between women may go beyond professional rivalry and can also manifest itself in competition based on age or appearance. The hostility that may exist as a result, according to Starr, is more likely to be seen in passive aggressive behavior from women as opposed to the more open forms of resentment shown by men.

Another aspect of mentoring that relates to this study has to do with the mentoring relationship between a supervisor and their employee. One possible key to gaining access to that kind of senior level exposure as well as to getting training in the kinds of skills necessary to impress at the executive level may lie with an employee's immediate supervisor. Several studies have examined the supervisor-employee relationship. Raabe and Beehr (2003) looked at a connection between supervisors and their employees' job satisfaction and commitment to the organization. Fritz and Kennard (1994) stated that employees who develop a good working relationship with their supervisor increase their chances of being promoted. They did not, however, conduct a study to investigate this further, and the gender of the mentors and mentees was not mentioned. Clearly, there is a need to examine this relationship more closely to see how the relationship with a supervisor can play a part in the career advancement of employees. This study explored the supervisor-employee relationship but will include the aspect of gender by focusing on the female leader-female employee dynamic and its impact on the mentee's career advancement.

Women Working Together

A central aspect of this study has to do with the relationship between women, and several other researchers have also examined this dynamic. Heim and Murphy (2001)

described the female-female relationship as love hate, and this idea became the focus of studies that they conducted over several years. What led them to begin their research was their own experiences as executives in Fortune 500 companies where there were few women in leadership positions. They found that instead of helping other women up the corporate ladder “many women in the large corporations often did the opposite. They actively sabotaged one another” (Heim & Murphy, 2001, p. 2). This observation led Heim and Murphy (2001) to spend years compiling data gleaned from conducting gender workshops and from consulting in Fortune 500 companies. Then, they posted a questionnaire that assessed the preferences of and the difficulties in working for or with people of the same or the other gender. Questions such as “Whom would you rather work for—a man or a woman?,” “What has been your most difficult situation with other women?,” and “What (or who) caused the problem?” were included in their questionnaire (p. 4). When Heim and Murphy (2001) began to sift through the responses what they read where “countless, gruesome tales of betrayal and sabotage” (p. 4). They also found that “relationships among women often polarize at two extremes: either they are truly wonderful or they’re quite terrible. There is little in between” (p. 5). Their book focused on women in the workplace and the studies that they conducted, which found that when women worked together they often experienced conflict with one another. Heim and Murphy (2001) referred to this phenomenon as a “catfight,” which they felt was apropos when considering that in the animal kingdom cats usually fight over territory but usually without any physical contact (p. 5). This idea of females attacking each other indirectly played into their findings on the female-female dynamic. When conflict between women was studied, they found that attacks were usually done through means such as gossip, the

spreading of rumors, or sabotage. One study showed that women sabotaging other women had increased by 50% from 1988 to 1998 (Briles, 1999).

One of the explanations proposed as a reason for conflicts between working women harkens back to the idea of gender socialization and stereotypes. According to Heim and Murphy (2001), “When men take command of a situation, they’re perceived as resolute and authoritative, but if women try to appear powerful it can skew female relationships” (p. 25). Heim and Murphy (2001) also stated that women were socialized to be friendly and theorized that in order for friendship to exist between women there must be a sharing of power, something they called “The Power Dead-Even Rule” (p. 53). They explained that, for women, friendship implies giving to another person and sharing, while power results in someone taking from the other person or directing them in some way. Power, they concluded, does not feel like a friendly action and could be perceived as blatant hostility. Because relationships are so important to women, there is a much higher expectation of power-sharing with those they are closest to, which is something they did not find in their studies of male interactions. According to Heim and Murphy (2001), “Some women managers will even back off from following through on discipline because they fear the damage it will do to their relationship with a female employee” (p. 26).

Mizrahi (2004) blamed tokenism for the source of hostility between women in the workplace, arguing how some organizations will allow a few women into their upper ranks to fulfill a quota of some kind leading these women to be viewed as “tokens” (p. 1588). Mizrahi proposed that token status for women led to negative associations with being female, causing women to want to disassociate themselves from other women in

order to gain acceptance from their male peers and supervisors. He explained: “When women discover that they are considered inferior workers, and when men subject them to loyalty tests, exclusion, and general hostility because of their sex, they begin to realize that it does not pay to be a woman” (Mizrahi, 2004, p. 1597). What happens next is what Ely called “personal self-enhancing strategies” that may be at the expense of other women (as cited in Mizrahi, 2004, p. 1598). One of the noted outcomes from these strategies was women who began to evaluate men more favorably than women. Another outcome was women who developed a preference for solo status. In another words, they enjoyed being one of the few women in their position and actively worked to keep other women from advancing by excessively criticizing a female job candidate or by finding ways to undermine a female peer (Kanter, 1993).

Another dynamic attributed to conflict between women in the workplace has to do with competition. Tanenbaum (2002) suggested that one reason why female peers may see each other as adversaries is because they believe they are competing with each other for advancement. In an organization where women are merely tokens in the more powerful positions of the company, women may see a high position filled by one woman as leaving one fewer position for the other women in the organization. When it comes to male-dominated jobs, women can find there are only limited opportunities to succeed and view each other as rivals (Tanenbaum, 2002).

Summary

The literature review explored the various experiences of female leaders. It also examined the concept of mentoring, its definitions, how it relates to career advancement, and the barriers women face in acquiring a mentor. Finally, studies that attributed conflict

between women in the workplace to gender socialization, tokenism, and competition were found. What was not found was qualitative literature that specifically looked at the relationship between female supervisors and their female employees as it relates to leadership and a desire to accelerate through the corporate ranks. This study examined this relationship from the employee's perspective, allowing their perceptions about the relationship's affect on their career advancement to be revealed.

Chapter 3: Methodology

Research Design

The purpose of this study was to explore the perceptions female employees, working in Corporate America, have about their relationship with female supervisors and how they believe it affects their career advancement. Qualitative research was used to uncover the meaning behind the experiences that people have. In using this paradigm, researchers seek to see situations through the eyes of their subjects and understand their viewpoints by asking open-ended questions so that the participants can explain their experiences in their own words without influence from the researcher (Creswell, 2005). The intent of qualitative research is not to find an objective truth, but instead it assumes that knowledge is subjective and does not apologize for that. Rather, qualitative researchers see the value in uncovering the meaning that people attach to their own life experiences (Marshall & Rossman, 2006). The focus of qualitative research is on the participants' perceptions and how they choose to interpret their life experiences. Since this study involved multiple women, the researcher sought to understand the realities that each participant had constructed for themselves (Merriam, 1988).

In this study, the researcher explored how professional women view their female bosses' impact on their career advancement. In particular, the intention was to investigate the perceived influence that female supervisors have in relation to a glass ceiling that keeps women from rising into top leadership positions. The researcher approached the research from a narrative inquiry perspective to allow the participants' voices to be heard with the understanding that the researcher's own perspective would be a part of the conversation.

According to Marshall and Rossman (2006), in the conduct of narrative inquiry, “there is open recognition that the researcher is not just passively recording and reporting the narrator’s reality but is constructing the written record collaboratively with the narrator” (p. 118). Narrative research is a strategy where the researcher asks the study participants to share stories about their lives and then retells those stories by combining them with views from the researcher’s life (Clandinin & Connelly, 2000).

Research Participants

Creswell (2006) defined purposeful sampling as a strategy where researchers intentionally choose people and/or environments that will help them better understand the central phenomenon (p. 204). For this study, the researcher used purposeful sampling to find 10 female participants who (a) work or have worked in Corporate America, (b) were between the ages of 22–45, and (c) have reported to a female supervisor in this environment.

The researcher used a snowball sampling to identify study participants who met the desired criteria. According to Creswell (2005), “Snowball sampling occurs when the researcher asks people they know to identify study participants” (p. 149). For this study, the researcher sent an e-mail to her network of personal and professional contacts, detailing the purpose of the study and listing the specific criteria needed to be a participant. Within 1 hour, more than 10 possible participants were identified by these contacts.

The next step was to contact these women, verify that they met the study criteria, and explain the study’s purpose to them either in person or by phone. Once the first 10 women who qualified as study participants were identified, they were notified by phone

or e-mail so that they could give their consent verbally or in written format. Once the participants gave their consent, the researcher followed up by giving them a hard copy of the consent form, which outlined their willingness to take part in a tape-recorded interview process.

Research Strategies

As this study focused on the lived experiences of the participants, an in-depth interview strategy was used to gather data in order to capture, through their own words, the meaning these women attached to their experiences (Marshall & Rossman, 2006). In addition to noting the words that the women spoke, observation also played an important role as the researcher noted the body language and overall affect of the participants as they told their stories. But it was the words and the way that they were spoken that allowed the researcher to know what observation alone could not tell her. Patton (2002) stated the following:

We cannot observe feelings, thoughts, and intentions. We cannot observe behaviors that took place at a previous moment in time. We cannot observe how people have organized the world and the meanings they have attached to it. We have to ask people questions about those things. (p. 341)

According to Marshall and Rossman (2006), qualitative, in-depth interviews are more like conversations, rather than formal interviews. In the case of this study, the participant's perspective on their relationship with their female supervisor needed to unfold as the participant saw it, not as interpreted by the researcher (Patton, 2002). There are advantages to conducting in-depth interviews, including the ability to collect data quickly and the fact that it allows the researcher to understand the perspectives of the participants and the meanings they attach to their experiences. But there are disadvantages as well. "If study participants are unwilling to share their experiences, the

data collected may be minimal, or if the researcher lacks the skills to question a participant in a way that draws them out, the narratives may be short” (Marshall & Rossman, 2006, p. 102). To prepare for these interviews, the researcher created a protocol that included open-ended questions aimed at encouraging in-depth responses from the participants.

Protection of Human Subjects

Since this study was going to be released for publication, the researcher sought permission from the university’s Institutional Review Board (see Appendix A). The study participants were provided with information about the study, and they were guaranteed that their identities and the identities of their corporations would not be revealed. The participants were then asked to sign a consent form that assured them that confidentiality and anonymity would be maintained when discussing the study’s findings (see Appendix B). Only the researcher knows the true identities of the participants. Their real names were replaced with pseudonyms in the study’s written documentation and were not purposefully mentioned during the taped interviews. In addition, the tapes used for transcription purposes were kept in a secured area and then destroyed after their use.

Data Collection

Data collection within a qualitative paradigm involves more than just gathering facts. According to Schram (2006), “Rather, you engage in an active process of interpretation, noting some things as significant, noting but ignoring others as not significant, and missing other potentially significant things altogether” (p. 11). The researcher developed a framework to identify different areas of interest to explore (see Figure 1). This framework provided structure to the interview process that was used to

gather information from the participants. Open-ended questions were developed from the framework so that the interviews took the form of guided conversations.

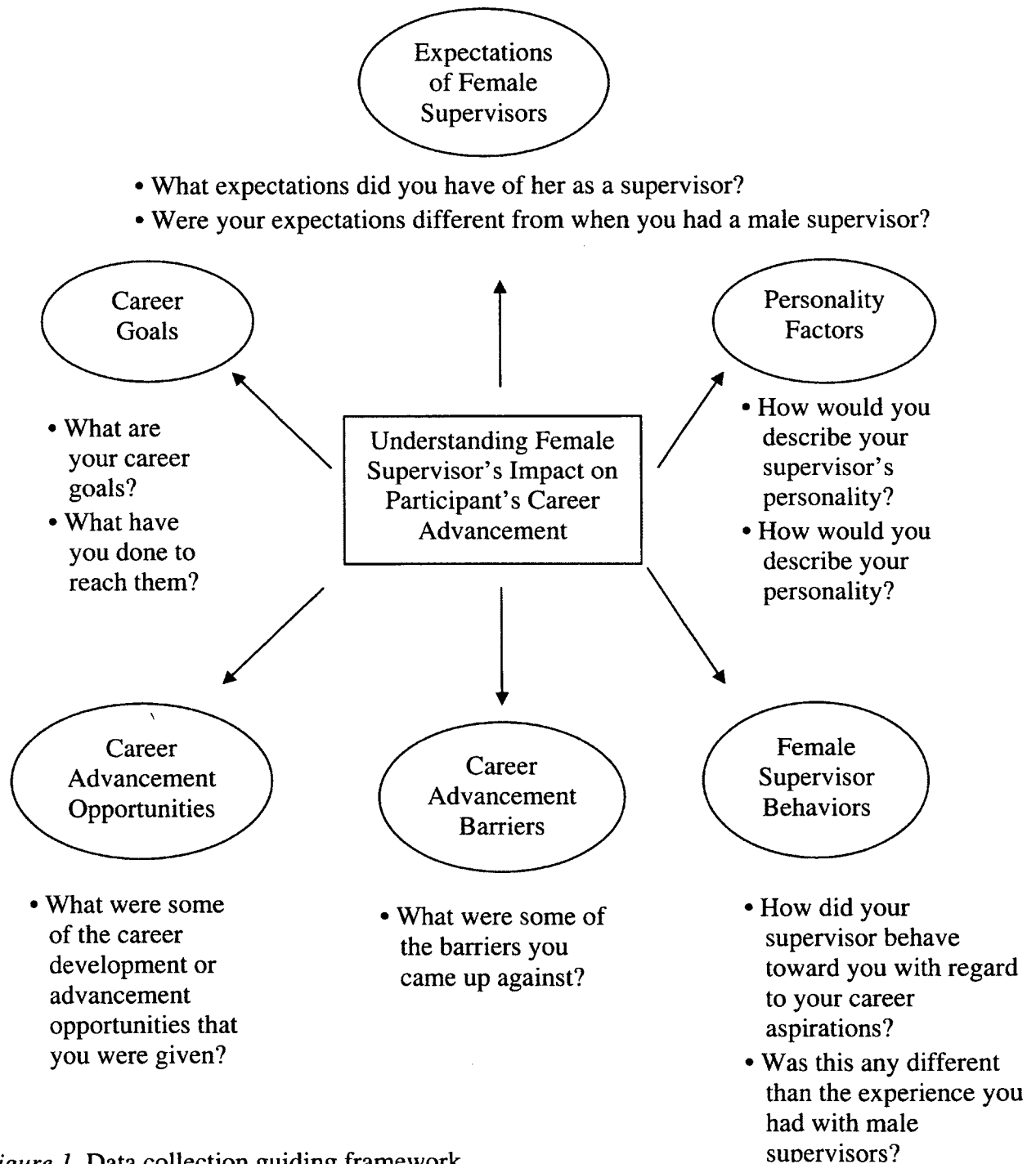


Figure 1. Data collection guiding framework.

The interviews were conducted in person and in a setting that was informal and comfortable. In some cases, the researcher traveled to where the participants lived and met with them over a meal at a restaurant that had a quiet area where conversation could be heard and recorded on audio cassette. For some participants, it was more convenient for them to meet in their office or in a conference room. The researcher followed each interview by transcribing the information from the tape word for word, only making minor grammatical changes when necessary. Each participant reviewed their transcript in order to verify that the information captured was accurate. In some instances, minor changes were made to the transcripts when feedback received warranted the corrections.

Data Analysis

Once the researcher collected the data, the data had to be analyzed. Creswell (2009) stated that when analyzing data from a qualitative perspective the researcher must read, read, and re-read the data. He explained: "It involves preparing the data for analysis, conducting different analyses, moving deeper and deeper into understanding the data, representing the data, and making an interpretation of the larger meaning of the data" (Creswell, 2009, p. 183). Since the researcher used a narrative inquiry approach, the analysis involved interpreting the stories these women told. One way to analyze narratives is to look for themes. This involves focusing on what the women say more than on how they say it. According to Reissman (1993), "An unacknowledged philosophy of language underpins the approach: language is a direct and unambiguous route to meaning" (p. 110). In this study, the researcher began her analysis by reading through the transcripts of each interview, looking for and highlighting any meaningful phrases related to the study's purpose. This was followed by a second reading that allowed the researcher

to write theme titles in the margins next to some of the highlighted areas. Once these themes were reviewed, patterns were identified. After continuing this process for all 10 transcripts, a separate document was created where themes were recorded and all phrases or statements that pertained to them were written beside each theme title. This process was used in order to identify any commonalities that emerged between the participants' experiences and the meanings they attached to them.

Role of the Researcher

When considering what role to play as this study was conducted, the researcher took into account the following considerations: (a) the degree to which the researcher would participate in the study, (b) the degree to which the researcher would reveal that a study is going on, (c) the degree to which the researcher would spend time with the participants, and (d) how specific the focus of the study would be (Marshall & Rossman, 2006). After reflecting on the purpose of this study, the researcher determined that her role would be one of partial participant in that she works in the setting of Corporate America but not in the specific settings of any of the participants. Also, in accordance with the ethical considerations mentioned earlier, the researcher fully revealed to the participants that a study was being conducted as well as its purpose and its eventual publication. The extensiveness of the interaction between the participants and the researcher was minimal because the interviews lasted no more than 1 hour in length, with only a few follow-up interviews needed for clarification or additional information. Finally, the researcher managed her role efficiently by developing specific and focused research questions. Although the questions were open-ended and the tone conversational,

there was intent behind them; the questions triggered responses that provided insight related to the study's purpose.

Trustworthiness and Credibility

Working in Corporate America herself, the researcher understands the politics involved in that culture. For example, when things are going well within a company, you tell everyone. When there are problems, you smile and pretend that all is well, particularly to those outside your company. Because of this, it was imperative for the researcher to build trust with the participants so that they not only felt comfortable sharing the positive interactions that occurred with a female supervisor but also felt they could disclose any unpleasant interactions that may have occurred. The researcher also wanted the participants to feel confident that the information would not be tied to them when the study was published. The participants needed to trust that the researcher would keep their identities and the names of their organizations confidential; therefore, it was critical to have a consent form with a confidentiality clause.

Building trust with the participants in this study was challenging because the researcher had only a short amount of time to establish a bond with each participant. Marshall and Rossman (2006) believed you can build trust with participants by educating them about the researcher's role, what the researcher is interested in learning about, and the possible uses of the information. But, they also believed it is important for researchers to reveal their own biases. According to Marshall and Rossman (2006), "Norms of reciprocity suggest that the researcher cannot be simply a spongelike observer because many people will not respond to or trust someone who will not take a stand" (p. 79). With this in mind, the researcher revealed her own position working in Corporate America and

some of the positive and negative experiences she had had with female supervisors over the years. In this way, the researcher presented herself to participants as more of an insider, rather than an outsider, and they appeared to be comfortable when opening up about their own experiences.

Assuring readers of the credibility of the study was dependent on making it clear that the researcher was not looking to find some generalizable truth or answer that could be applied to all interactions between the entire population of female employees and their female supervisors. Rather, it was important to let the participants' words speak for themselves, demonstrating the researcher's willingness to present different, equally valid accounts from different perspectives (Schram, 2006). One method the researcher used to promote credibility had to do with the confirmability of the findings. Marshall and Rossman (2006) discussed how confirmability has to do with objectivity and the need to seek other readers to see if they draw the same inferences from the data that the researcher does. For this study, the researcher had the participants themselves confirm the words that were attributed to them.

Another method the researcher used to add to the credibility of the study was the act of reflection. Creswell (2005) stated, "Because qualitative researchers believe that your personal views can never be kept separate from interpretations, personal reflections about the meaning of the data are included in the research study" (p. 251). The researcher used a journal to write her reflections at the end of each interview in order to describe what her feelings and thoughts were regarding the interview and the participant and what was said. This, in turn, helped when interpreting the data by making her aware of any personal bias that may have been evident in the journal entries. The researcher

included this information in the study to show transparency to the reader by revealing her thoughts and feelings.

Finally, the aim of qualitative research is not to be replicable, but rather seeks to record “the complexity of situational contexts and interrelations as they occur naturally” (Marshall & Rossman, 2006, p. 204). The research done in this study cannot be replicated because it is based on people’s experiences and each person’s story is uniquely their own. But by keeping all of the data collected in an easily retrievable, well-organized format, the researcher will open up her findings to other researchers who wish to analyze her data.

Limitations of the Study

This study had a couple of limitations associated with it. First, the narrative inquiry approach was used to collect the data for this study. This approach involved interviewing the participants and relying on their memories as they related their past experiences. Memory could have produced faulty recollections, particularly when one considers the length of time it had been since some of these experiences occurred for a few of this study’s participants. Second, since the researcher fit the same criteria as the participants and shared many of the same experiences, she may have been biased during the course of the interviews and the interpretation of the findings. The researcher sought to mitigate this as much as possible by creating interview questions that were devoid of bias and by journaling at the end of each interview to reflect on the feelings experienced when hearing the words of each participant.

Chapter 4: Findings

The purpose of this study was to explore the perceptions female employees, working in Corporate America, have about their relationship with female supervisors and how they believe it affects their career advancement. The researcher used a qualitative approach in order to explore the women's perception of a glass ceiling in the business world. Moreover, the researcher sought to understand the meaning that the women attached to their relationship with their supervisor regarding either their help in breaking through the invisible barrier or their contribution toward their stagnant career.

This chapter is divided into three main areas: (a) demographic information on the participants, (b) a short description of each participant to give a glimpse into who they are as people, and (c) an analysis of the themes that emerged from the interviews using quotes extracted from their individual interviews.

Demographics

From a demographic point of view, the participants were a mix of Caucasian and Hispanic females ranging in age from 22 to 44 at the time they reported to their female supervisors. All but three of the 10 participants worked in the Southwestern portion of the United States in industries that included retail, finance, real estate, consumer goods, and criminal justice (see Table 1).

Table 1

Demographic Information of Study Participants

Participant	Age (at time of experience)	Ethnicity	Industry	Geographic Location	Length of Relationship
Alex	30	Caucasian	Retail	Southwest USA	2 years
Beth	27	Caucasian	Finance	Southwest USA	2 years
Cathy	26	Hispanic	Consumer Goods	Southwest USA	2 years
Debbie	22	Caucasian	Retail	Southwest USA	9 months
Emily	44	Caucasian	Retail	Northwest USA	3 years
Frida	28	Hispanic	Finance	Southwest USA	5 years
Gretchen	25	Hispanic	Criminal Justice	Southwest USA	1 year
Holly	43	Caucasian	Real Estate	West USA	3 years
Isis	23	Caucasian	Retail	Southwest USA	1 year
Janice	30	Hispanic	Telecommunications	Northwest USA	1.5 years

Participant Narratives

In order to protect the participants' identities, pseudonyms have been used to refer to the women. The following overview offers a glimpse into their personalities, their

views on professional development and career advancement, and the qualities they look for in a leader.

Alex. I met Alex at a restaurant for lunch, and I discovered that her quiet demeanor meant that she tended to only answer questions rather than volunteer additional information on her own. I also quickly realized that Alex was unique when compared to the other women in my study. I had just begun asking her some preliminary questions when I found that, unlike the other nine participants, she had nothing but positive things to say about her former female supervisor. Now in her late 30s, Alex has always worked in the Southwest portion of the United States in a retail sales type of environment. She started out in clothing sales with a major retailer right out of college and then moved on to a position as an area manager with a candy company before taking her current position in the oil and gas industry. As we talked, Alex was upfront about her ambition, “I always keep my mind and ears open for bigger opportunities” (personal communication, August 8, 2010). She also mentioned that giving positive reinforcement was something she expected from female bosses who, in her experience, were more apt to be supportive than male bosses. Alex explained:

I think the main difference between male bosses and female bosses is, in my experience, that female bosses are more apt to give you a pat on the back. Male bosses are more . . . if you don’t hear anything then you’re doing okay. (personal communication, August 8, 2010)

While speaking glowingly of the supervisor she had at the candy company, Alex mentioned how willing her supervisor was to challenge her, teach her, and listen to her when she had questions. She felt like the best things she learned from this woman were to always stay positive and to be more patient in her desire for rapid career advancement.

Alex also mentioned that she and her former supervisor are still in contact today and meet for lunch regularly.

Beth. Beth was referred to me by a friend who had worked with her in the banking industry several years ago and described her as a friendly and outgoing person. As I watched her bounce into the restaurant where we met for a weekend brunch, I could instantly see what my friend meant. Beth had a wide smile, sparkling eyes, and a warmth to her that made you feel as if you had known her for years. Beth was a person who was quite talkative, and she described her experiences and feelings in great detail. Beth chose to talk about the job she had prior to her current one in the public relations/corporate communications field. Her job now involves a lot of stress, crazy deadlines, and a demanding supervisor, but it is an environment that she thrives in since she was a competitive athlete growing up and responded well to coaches that always demanded the best from her. She also was open about her ambition and does not expect to be handed opportunities for growth—she goes after them. Beth said, “I feel it’s up to me to show my ambitious side and my eagerness to learn and putting in the hours and the work ethic” (personal communication, April 4, 2011). As our conversation continued, I got the sense that Beth was a positive person who would see the good in any situation, which held true when she started speaking about her last supervisor in the banking industry. She kept saying how much she liked her as a person and how her supervisor had really made her feel welcome since Beth was new to the city at that time. Beth attributed their 12 year age difference to the almost motherly demeanor her supervisor had towards her. She talked about the time they would spend together outside of work; for example, her supervisor would invite her to dinner, set her up on dates, and so forth. Beth declared,

“She was a very nice, good person . . . um . . . on a personal level” (personal communication, April 4, 2011).

Beth’s last supervisor was in direct contrast to the female supervisor Beth had reported to in another branch. Because of that experience, she said she had preconceived notions about female leaders. She believed that they would be focused on themselves, would not make time for her, or give her the tools and resources needed to do her job. In that job, Beth had worked as a personal banker but took a chance and moved to a new city to take advantage of a job opening where the corporate office was housed. Ultimately, Beth’s goal was to become a financial services manager. So, she left her family and friends to go to a city where she knew no one, but that was how strongly she wanted to move up the ladder. Beth said she was prepared to do whatever she needed to do to develop herself professionally.

Cathy. I met Cathy through some nonprofit work I was volunteering for and as we worked together over a 3-day period, we exchanged information about ourselves. When I mentioned that I was working on my dissertation and we discussed the purpose of the research, she expressed interest in being a study participant. I soon learned that though she seemed eager to be a part of the study, she appeared ill at ease during the interview itself. Unlike most of the other participants, we did not have our discussion in a restaurant over a meal. Instead, I conducted this interview in a training room at my place of business for the sake of expediency since she had been visiting there that day. Perhaps the sterile environment of the room contributed to her unease since it may have felt less like a casual, social exchange. Throughout the interview, she would frequently ramble from one point to another and then check with me to see if I was getting what I wanted. I

would reassure her that there were no “right” answers, only what she felt and experienced.

Cathy is currently in her mid-30s and working with the homeless population, helping to transform their lives. The experience she talked about happened when she was in her mid-20s and working in the milk industry, covering a large territory that included parts of the South and Midwest. As a communication specialist, she was in charge of scheduling media interviews for the industry dieticians, setting up public relation tables at school fairs, and working to get the message out that drinking milk was good for you. She seemed unclear as to the title of the woman she reported to, calling her president of marketing, then director of marketing and community relations, then vice president. One thing that was different about Cathy’s experience from some of the other participants was that she never spoke openly about her desire to develop her skills and move up the corporate ladder. She felt that just by working closely with another person, that person would be able to see what she could do and her career development would flow naturally from that. But Cathy said she did not get an opportunity to work closely with this woman and attributed their lack of closeness to a variety of factors (a) her supervisor’s possible lack of knowledge of the work that Cathy was doing, (b) her supervisor was not in a relationship and did not believe a person should be in one as Cathy was, and (c) her supervisor came from the Northeast and possibly just was not a warm person because of it. She did comment that her supervisor seemed to have a much closer relationship with a male colleague and attributed that to the fact that he was older than Cathy and more seasoned in his role. She also mentioned that he was handsome and knew how to make her supervisor feel “special.” Cathy was only 4 years out of college when she held this

position, and she said that she did not feel comfortable “playing up to her, buttering her up” (personal communication, February 23, 2011).

Just as she was not direct in stating her desire to move up within the company, Cathy stated she also was not direct about why she was leaving the company. Instead of discussing her feeling of being “pigeon-holed” in her position, she told her supervisor that she missed her hometown and wanted to move back there. When asked to sum up what she was looking for in a female leader, Cathy said that, male or female, she felt that a good leader is someone who is open to suggestions, who allows you to have an idea and go with it, and says, “I’m here if you need me. Let me know if you have any questions or if I can be of any assistance, but knock yourself out” (personal communication, February 23, 2011).

Debbie. I met Debbie in a downtown hotel bar early one evening where she was meeting friends before they had a “Girls Night Out” on the town. As I made my way through the crowded room, I easily found Debbie. She had been described to me as someone who “stands out in a crowd,” and she did. Long platinum blonde hair, big, bold jewelry, short skirt, and a fur jacket, Debbie appeared as someone who likes to be noticed, likes to be fashionable, and spends money to do both. We made our way out onto the patio where it was quieter to do the interview. What I noticed first about Debbie’s personality was that her clothing belied a demeanor that was much quieter and more hesitant than I expected. Throughout the interview, Debbie chose her words carefully and would frequently stop and ask me if she was answering my questions. I learned through the course of the interview that, although she spoke about an experience just out of college when she was in the interior design field, she later went on to become a lawyer

and that may have contributed to her need to make sure her facts were stated correctly and clearly.

Debbie is currently in her early to mid-30s and is married. Because she is no longer employed, she spends her time doing charity work. About 10 years ago, however, she started out in the interior design field, working for a woman who owned her own firm and who was in her 60s at the time. Debbie described their personal relationship as a good one. She stated that the woman treated her much better than any other employee, and she speculated that it was because Debbie came from a wealthy background and that this woman was materialistic in nature, impressed by high-priced clothing, jewelry, and so forth.

Going into the position, Debbie said she had great expectations. She believed that working for a woman would be a good experience: "I thought it would be awesome because we would have similar kinds of communication skills . . . those kinds of things. I was excited" (personal communication, January 18, 2011). She also said that she was hoping to spend a lot of one-on-one time with her supervisor so that she could get the most out of the experience. Debbie admitted, "I was looking for a mentor. In every business there's going to be different processes and procedures, so lay them out and then move forward from that" (personal communication, January 18, 2011). She went on to say, though, that her contact with her supervisor turned out to be minimal, which may have been a good thing. Debbie described the woman as one who had a tendency to yell, forget what she had approved at an earlier date, and did not like to share the spotlight. While Debbie admitted that she was paid well and that she got some wonderful design experience that she probably would not have had in a larger firm, she did not get

exposure with clients. Ultimately, it was the owner's unprofessional behavior that made Debbie decide to leave and go to law school. She stated that the firm was notorious for turnover and nobody ever stayed more than 2 or 3 years.

Emily. I met Emily for lunch at a quiet restaurant in Tacoma, Washington. I met Emily years ago and have stayed in touch, but this was the first time we were talking in depth about her work life. What I already knew was that she was in her late 40s and had worked for the same retail corporation for her entire career. I also knew that she had worked for several female supervisors during that time. She had never commented on them one way or another other than to mention their names from time to time.

What I quickly learned during our conversation was that Emily, unlike the other participants in this study, lacks ambition—at least at this stage in her life. She mentioned that when she first started out she was interested in growing and learning. Currently, she would need to change departments in order to climb higher, and she has no interest in doing that. Until recently, Emily worked just 35 hours a week and that suited her just fine. She has enough years to retire from her job, but she continues working to receive the benefits package that the institution offers its full-time employees.

When you meet Emily you get an instant sense of calm. You feel as if nothing is going to ruffle her and that you can trust her, which are good qualities for someone who works in a sales position. Throughout our conversation, I heard several instances where other younger female employees at her store would confide in her and ask for her opinions, and she seemed to enjoy her role as an advisor. The only time she got ruffled was when she felt that one of these other ladies was not being treated fairly or when their

hard work was overlooked. She believed that female leaders should take a genuine interest in their employees. Emily mentioned the following:

I had a previous supervisor who was the kind of person who was very much a giving person, who cared about the other people, wanted to know what their interests were and how she could help them, not just how the employee could help the department. (personal communication, January 30, 2011)

She also mentioned that she feels a leader should support your career development:

“Somebody who wants you to succeed, somebody who doesn’t just want you to make money for the company but wants to know what your goals are and where you want to go and helps you to get there” (personal communication, January 30, 2011). As for her relationships with her supervisors throughout the year, Emily’s strategy is pretty straightforward.

I think with each new supervisor I just want to learn about that person, learn their personality and what their expectations are and how to keep them happy. So if I meet their needs, then life is happy, my position stays where it is and . . . life is good! (personal communication, January 30, 2011)

Frida. Within minutes of meeting Frida, there was no doubt that this was a woman who yearned to learn. As we got started with the interview, she began relating her experience as a human resource (HR) coordinator in an accounting firm where she and her female boss were a two-woman HR department. She began at the firm when she was in her early 30s and attending school to pursue her bachelor’s degree. Her work, at that time, consisted mainly of administrative duties. But Frida was not content with that. She stated, “Once I was finished [with school], I thought I could take on some bigger pieces that she could delegate to me, but she continued to use me administratively” (personal communication, December 21, 2010). This did not sit well with this hard-charging, dynamic, young woman. Frida said what she really wanted in a female leader was

someone who would be a mentor to her and would have an open-door policy where she would encourage Frida to ask questions and to learn new things. Frida declared, “I have to say that development is my thing” (personal communication, December 21, 2010). Interestingly, Frida also mentioned that her supervisor had told her about how she was groomed to advance in her career by a male supervisor when she was starting out at the company.

Her relationship with her boss on a personal level seemed to be a good one. Frida said they were only 2 years apart in age but when she started working for her, her supervisor was married with two children while Frida was single. During the course of the 5 years they worked together, her supervisor got divorced and became a single mother. At this time, her supervisor started turning to her to do “single” things together, and she started copying the way Frida would dress. Frida said, “She enjoyed me and my personality” (personal communication, December 21, 2010). Yet, Frida also noticed a change in their working relationship after her supervisor became divorced, and she felt that her boss may have become more protective of her job and shared less and less information with Frida. Eventually, a lack of learning led Frida to move on to a new job. Frida and her former supervisor still meet occasionally for happy hour, but despite repeatedly expressing her desire to take on more responsibility during their years together, her former supervisor is still unaware of why Frida left the company.

Gretchen. When I first saw Gretchen coming in the restaurant where we were doing our lunchtime interview, the first thing I noticed was the big smile on her face. As soon as we started talking, I learned that Gretchen had a lot to smile about. She and her husband, both successful attorneys, were expecting their first child. Gretchen planned to

work up until the baby's birth and then return to work after her maternity leave was over. This led me to believe that while being a wife and mother were clearly important roles for Gretchen, her career was something she valued as well.

As we began discussing female leaders and the qualities she believed they should possess, I learned that Gretchen felt that female attorneys, in particular, had a bad reputation when it came to working with and for them. She had always heard from people that since females had to wait a long time before they were allowed to go to law school, a lot of the older women attorneys had a bit of a chip on their shoulders. Gretchen stated, "I think there is a hint of jealousy or, at least, misunderstanding that . . . thinking that younger female attorneys don't have an appreciation for what was given up and, you know, what it took for them to get there" (personal communication, December 21, 2010).

In her first job out of law school, Gretchen worked for a female attorney who was also a partner in the law firm. She said her expectation was that a woman supervisor would be understanding, empathetic, and compassionate concerning Gretchen's work schedule and studying for the bar. When that did not happen, Gretchen was a bit surprised but then encountered other female attorneys later in her career that also seemed to have an absence of compassion and a lack of camaraderie. Gretchen admitted that she preferred to work for men because she found them to be more open and more mentor-like.

Holly. Upon meeting Holly in her office where we conducted the interview due to her busy schedule, I immediately got a sense of quiet power. She struck me as a woman who knew what she was doing and did not feel a need to prove herself. She did not dwell on her title or the things that she was in charge of, as we were getting to know one

another. I learned about her vast accomplishments from a woman who worked for her, and she had nothing but glowing remarks to say about Holly in terms of her job knowledge and the way that she treated her employees, always looking for ways to let them shine.

Holly, who is currently an executive in the real estate industry, was always interested in learning as much as she could and in developing herself professionally. Earlier in her career, when she worked as a “landman” (someone who helps a company lease property to drillers), she met her first female supervisor and had great expectations. Holly stated, “I found her very interesting to talk to, like she was somebody I could learn a lot from” (personal communication, August 26, 2010). Holly also knew her supervisor was smart and that she would be challenging to work with, but Holly was attracted to those qualities. Another quality she looked for in a leader had to do with someone who keeps you in the loop. Holly said, “A boss who is a great communicator, lets you know what’s going on. That, I think, is just really, really important” (personal communication, August 26, 2010). This was something she discovered was not one of her supervisor’s strengths. In fact, the experience turned out to be one that went from bad to worse and, eventually, her supervisor’s behavior drove her to quit her job without another job to go to. Still, Holly is someone who is able to compartmentalize and continues to admire many qualities that her supervisor possessed, but she would never want to work for her again. In general, Holly seemed to think that women make great leaders, and she does what she can to promote women within her organization.

Isis. I heard about Isis from a friend of mine who worked with her. And although she currently reported to a male supervisor, I knew that she had had a female supervisor

in the past. I talked briefly with Isis on the phone and arranged to meet her for lunch to conduct the interview. My first impression of Isis was that she looked quite professional in her business suit. She had a no-nonsense manner about her, and she struck me as someone who does not chit chat a lot but prefers to get right down to business. Or perhaps that is just the way it seemed to me since we did not do a lot of talking before the interview.

An ambitious woman in her 30s, Isis admitted that at 23 years of age, she had already set her sights on moving up the corporate ladder.

It's still about development and moving up, but back then it was really crucial for me. Back then I wasn't making a whole lot of money, and I was looking to see how I could make the move quick and fast and learn as well. (personal communication, August 15, 2010)

She also had a clear view on what she wanted in a leader: "I was hoping to have a boss that would help me learn . . . that wouldn't expect that I knew everything but would groom me along and help me along to learn the business" (personal communication, August 15, 2010). Although Isis mentioned that she had worked for a couple of female supervisors, she chose to talk in-depth about the experience she had earlier in her career when she was in her 20s, and her female supervisor was in her mid- to late 30s. She explained that the distribution company they worked for was mostly male-dominated, particularly in the upper management ranks, and that her supervisor was probably the only female manager. Isis also revealed that, although they worked in offices across the hall from one another, she rarely saw or spent time with her supervisor and that the male managers in the company were much more accessible and open to helping her learn. In the end, Isis felt disappointed that the camaraderie that she had expected to find with a female supervisor never materialized. Isis said, "I never had a personal conversation with

her the whole time that we worked together” (personal communication, August 15, 2010).

Janice. Janice knew someone I worked with on the West Coast, so we got together when I was there doing business. We met at her office so it was not as social an interaction as some of the other interviews, which may have contributed to the brevity of our conversation. Janice is also on the quiet side, which is interesting considering she is in the communications field. Currently, she works in the governmental relations field and reports to a female supervisor, but our conversation centered on the first experience she had with a female leader when she was starting out in her career. At the time, she had just finished her degree in communications and was working for a telecommunications company in an administrative role. Janice said she believes it is up to her to advance her career. So she worked hard, showed a lot of initiative, and, eventually, made her way into a communications specialist role. The female supervisor that she reported to was quite ambitious herself. Janice described her as driven, direct, and confident—qualities that she described as “male.”

When I asked Janice what she considered to be the qualities of a female leader, she said she felt they would be gentler than a man, easier to get along with. It is not surprising, then, that she went on to say that she did not jive with her hard-charging female supervisor, but she seemed to put the blame on herself. She explained that at that age—in her mid- to late 20s—she was insecure and was still learning her craft, so she felt intimidated by the knowledge and confidence of her much older boss. And her supervisor’s direct style of communication was off-putting. Janice said she would probably have felt more comfortable if they had spent some time getting to know one

another and building rapport. But her supervisor was extremely busy and focused on her own work so she did not spend time relationship-building with the people who reported to her. Ultimately, Janice moved on from that job and has reported to many other females over the years. She commented that her feeling is, regardless of who your supervisor is or how they treat you, it is up to you to carve your own career path by taking initiative and working hard.

Themes

The analysis of the interviews of the women's experiences and their perceptions of how their relationship with their supervisors impacted their career development brought forth consistent themes in three categories: (a) their expectations about what a supervisor should do for them and what they should do for themselves; (b) the tools that they felt their supervisor gave them or did not provide for them, which would help them to advance in their career; and (c) their relationship with their supervisor.

Expectations for themselves and supervisors. The participants in this study ranged from people who were still in the early stages of their careers to those who were more senior in their positions. This difference could account for the feeling that some were still interested in climbing higher on the career ladder, while others were more content to stay where they were. What they all had in common, though, was that they began working in Corporate America as ambitious women interested in professional development and career advancement. Beth stated frankly that when she began her job, she was looking up: "It was very important for me to move up within the company and give it everything I had" (personal communication, April 4, 2011). And she did not let a lack of knowledge get in her way. Beth declared, "I had no idea what I was doing, so I

completely taught myself” (personal communication, April 4, 2011). She also credited her lack of promotional opportunities as the reason why she switched departments. Beth explained:

I thought that I would have to be a banker for a very long time to get where I wanted to be—years and years—and that’s not what I wanted, so I decided at that point to move on. (personal communication, April 4, 2011)

Like Beth, Isis was also clear that when she was starting out, what she was looking for in a job was one that would allow her to grow. Isis said:

At the time, it was really more about development and helping me to get my foot through the door and see what other opportunities there were. I was looking to see how I could make the move quick and fast and learn as well. (personal communication, August 15, 2010)

Isis took responsibility for her own learning; she was prepared to teach herself, and she found the men in her department more amenable than her supervisor to teach her. Isis revealed, “They were more open with me so it was easier for me to try and learn something from them or ask them, ‘Hey, how does this work?’ or ‘Can I do this?’” (personal communication, August 15, 2010). Even today, now that Isis has moved up the career ladder, her ambition has not dimmed: “In today’s world, it’s still about development and moving up, but back then it was really crucial for me” (personal communication, August 15, 2010). Janice shared Isis’ point of view and believed that it was up to her to take responsibility for her own development. Janice expressed the following:

I was in customer service, and I wanted to get over to marketing and our communications department. So I was very much focused on doing that and just really getting myself in the right position to get over there, taking on special projects, that kind of thing. (personal communication, February 16, 2011)

Unlike many of the other participants who had no problem communicating their desires to move up to their supervisor, Cathy blamed herself, in part, for her lack of movement. She claimed that she never spoke about her career ambitions: “I don’t think I clearly relayed that information” (personal communication, February 23, 2011). Holly went into a position not expecting anything to be handed to her. In fact, she expected to have to work hard to get ahead and that appealed to her. Holly stated, “I was definitely not scared of a challenge, and I wanted to learn more. I thought, ‘I can learn a lot here. It’s going to be tough, but I want to do it’” (personal communication, August 26, 2010). Holly also had a unique point of view when it came to the idea of being treated fairly by a supervisor. Instead of making that an expectation she had for a supervisor, she felt it was her own responsibility to make the relationship work or not. Holly declared the following:

You know we’re all not going to get treated fairly every now and then, and you walk away from those types of people, you know? You try to break the barriers and change their thought of you as a person. If you can’t, you walk away.
(personal communication, August 26, 2010)

When it came to the participants’ expectations of what role a supervisor should play in an employee’s career development, all of the participants felt, to some degree, that a supervisor should help them grow. Debbie believed a supervisor should make time for her employees and have a relationship with them. Debbie stated, “I looked for someone who was really good at communication skills, who spends one-on-one time with you” (personal communication, January 18, 2011). Communication was also a key expectation for Holly. She said, “I wanted a boss who was a great communicator, lets you know what’s going on. That, I think, is just really, really important” (personal communication, August 26, 2010). Isis expected a supervisor to be someone who would

take her under her wing. She admitted, “I was hoping to have a boss that would help me learn . . . that wouldn’t expect that I knew everything but would groom me along and help me along to learn the business” (personal communication, August 15, 2010). Emily agreed and said that she expects a supervisor to want to help their employees succeed.

Somebody who is supportive, somebody who wants you to succeed, somebody who doesn’t just want you to make money for the company but wants to know what your goals are and where you want to go and helps you to get there. (personal communication, January 30, 2011).

Participants also had some preconceived notions about what it would be like to work for a female versus a male supervisor. Janice admitted the following:

At the time, I was probably preferring to work for a female—just feeling more comfortable—instead of working for, at the time, someone I considered to be an old man—someone in their 50s—because I just wouldn’t have felt comfortable. (personal communication, February 16, 2011).

Furthermore, Janice felt that having a female supervisor would lead to a natural camaraderie. She said, “The fact that we’re both women and we might relate better and maybe that they’d be nicer or they would be more gentle or they would be easier to get along with. I kind of had those preconceived notions” (personal communication, February 16, 2011). Besides her expectations of what a female supervisor should be like, Janice felt that any supervisor should help an ambitious employee move up. Janice stated the following:

I knew I needed that kind of help, someone to sort of vouch for me and see that I was ambitious and that I had initiative and use that information to help me find the job that I needed, or if there was one available, then to get that job. (personal communication, February 16, 2011)

Gretchen also had an idea of what it would be like to work for a female supervisor. Her impression of female attorneys, in general, was not positive. Gretchen admitted:

Female attorneys are difficult to work with. There is a more competitive nature with other females versus male attorneys. I think there is a hint of jealousy or, at least, misunderstanding that . . . thinking that younger female attorneys don't have an appreciation for what was given up and, you know, what it took for them to get there. (personal communication, December 21, 2010)

In summary, these women, particularly those in the early stage of their careers, all have ambition: whether it be to learn more, take on more responsibilities, or climb to the highest rung on their career ladder. They also lacked an attitude of entitlement. These women stated they were willing to take responsibility for the advancement of their careers. Instead of expecting their supervisors to hand them career advancement opportunities, these women were willing to work for them. They spoke of taking initiative to learn on their own, to pursue advanced degrees, and to do less exciting, but still necessary, tasks. In return, though, the participants all felt the supervisor's role was to assist in their development by taking an interest in their career goals, sharing knowledge and lessons learned, providing opportunities to increase their employees' exposure in the company, and actively looking for ways to help them expand their skills.

Tools they need to succeed. As the participants discussed their experiences, they talked about things that their supervisor did or did not do that they felt were necessary for them to either do their job, develop professionally, or advance in their career.

To do their job. Sometimes just being accessible and offering feedback were seen as valuable means of support. Alex was full of praise for her supervisor for always being there when she needed her: "Whatever we needed she provided for us. Anytime we had a question, we would talk about it and move on" (personal communication, August 8, 2010). This was in sharp contrast to Cathy's observation about her supervisor who she felt may have held back because of ignorance. Cathy stated, "I think there was a lack of

awareness on her part of what I needed to do, or I could look at it as she trusted what I was doing. I never found out” (personal communication, February 23, 2011). She also said she felt frustrated by her supervisor’s lack of communication. Working as a communication specialist, who was giving information out to the media, Cathy wanted to be sure her materials were high quality. Cathy explained the following:

I would be like, “Here’s what I’m sending out. Any feedback you have would be welcome,” and wouldn’t hear back. So I figured, I guess, I should just run with it. I’m sure it could have used some tweaking, but that’s what I got. (personal communication, February 23, 2011)

In addition to being available to answer questions and offer feedback, another tool that the participants felt was necessary for them to do their job well was recognition.

Beth, who worked long hours and handled the customers in her bank branch most days single-handedly, did not work hard in order to get awards or a pat on the back. However, just an acknowledgement of her efforts would have been appreciated. Beth mentioned:

I never got a “good job” now that I think about it. She knew that I could do it. I’d shown her I could do it. So then she just expected that out of me; it was just an expectation. (personal communication, April 4, 2011)

In fact, the lack of recognition was what Beth credited for ultimately killing her motivation. Finally, Alex said that knowing her boss had her back allowed her the freedom to try new things and take calculated risks without fear that her boss would desert her if things went badly. Alex stated, “She wouldn’t leave me high and dry” (personal communication, August 8, 2010).

To develop professionally and advance their career. Some participants also discussed how their supervisor provided them with opportunities or support that assisted them in advancing their career. Alex appreciated the fact that her supervisor asked about her goals and challenged her. Alex said, “She knew exactly where I wanted to go and

helped me along the way. She gave me different obstacles to see how I would overcome them” (personal communication, August 8, 2010). She also offered Alex advice: “She would say, ‘This is what you need to do in order to get to the next level’” (personal communication, August 8, 2010). Debbie also credited her supervisor at the interior design firm for giving her projects that challenged her. Debbie revealed the following:

I was actually doing major design work, not just drafting something or just taking someone else’s design and putting it on paper. I was doing my own designing. She could have kept that away from me, but she would say, “Why don’t you put together a board?” So she gave me opportunities to move forward. (personal communication, January 18, 2011)

However, Debbie was quick to point out that her supervisor was not one to spend time sharing information with her. Debbie declared, “Specific procedures that I had to learn about the firm, I learned from the other designers” (personal communication, January 18, 2011).

Beth was not as fortunate. When Beth made her ambitions known to her supervisor, she got more responsibility but with no pay off. Beth said, “I got to be a trainer—no pay increase, no bonus, nothing except a trainee slowing me down” (personal communication, April 4, 2011). Eventually, Beth’s supervisor did promote her but in a back-handed way. Beth explained, “She told me ‘just go ahead and pick out 3 weeks of vacation for this year’ meaning ‘you’re going to make personal banking officer this year’” (personal communication, April 4, 2010). In Cathy’s experience, she was hoping for a mentor but did not get one. Cathy said, “She just wasn’t very interested in developing me, learning about me, my strengths . . . just not very supportive” (personal communication, February 23, 2011). Ultimately, this lack of development caused Cathy to leave that job. Cathy added, “I felt there was nowhere for me to go. I was pigeon-holed

into being this person that was kind of behind the scenes” (personal communication, February 23, 2011). According to Emily, she felt her supervisor was completely oblivious to the idea that she could be helping her employees move up. Emily said, “I think she’s driven for herself financially, and she would like to be promoted herself. But I don’t think she understands that her employees would like to be promoted too” (personal communication, January 30, 2011). Emily believed that she needed to make things happen herself if she wanted to advance in her career. She added, “If I needed a manager to help me or to put me on a path for going somewhere, I would have been very disappointed” (personal communication, January 30, 2011). Isis also felt her supervisor’s lack of mentoring had more to do with the woman’s concern for her own development, rather than any malicious intent to keep Isis from advancing. Isis stated, “I thought that she was having such a difficult time herself in the male-dominated area that she was worried about herself and didn’t have the time to worry about anybody else” (personal communication, August 15, 2010). Career development was a primary motivator for Frida and during the experience that she shared about, she was considering getting a professional certification in human resources. But she did not get any support from her supervisor. Frida explained, “She wasn’t encouraging me, so I felt like she didn’t want me to grow or pursue that. I felt pushed down, like she wanted to keep me at a certain level and that was it” (personal communication, December 21, 2010). In Gretchen’s experience at her law firm, she found that the men in supervisory positions were much more willing to share their knowledge than her female direct supervisor. According to Gretchen, “She was never as mentoring as the male attorneys there. They were much easier to talk to or take questions to” (personal communication, December 21, 2010).

On the other hand, Holly could not praise her supervisor enough about her mentoring abilities and said that was one of the key reasons why she went to work for her after getting to know her at industry functions. Holly said, “I admired her depth of knowledge. I found her very interesting to talk to, like she was somebody I could learn a lot from” (personal communications, August 26, 2010). After she accepted a position in the woman’s company and began reporting to her, Holly’s admiration for her supervisor grew. Holly explained:

I learned a great deal from her, not only in business. She is a remarkable person. She could walk in a room and you could have every one of this year’s Nobel Peace Prize winners in there and she would know quite a bit about some topic to talk with each of them about. (personal communication, August 26, 2010)

And her supervisor’s mentoring attitude translated into personal development for Holly: “She gave me projects to do and let me kind of roll with them” (personal communication, August 26, 2010). Janice also was pleasantly surprised when her supervisor helped her get some exposure to senior executives. Janice stated the following:

It was one of those things where I brought to her attention a project that I wanted to work on, and she really embraced it and actually brought me with her to talk to the president of the company and let me explain it. Looking back now, I probably did a horrible job. But she let me explain it and she helped, which I didn’t expect. (personal communication, February 16, 2011)

Overall, the participants stated that one of the key tools needed to do their jobs well was feedback. Telling employees what they did well or what they could do differently next time was seen as critical, yet all but one of the participants felt that their supervisors withheld feedback either out of a lack of knowledge on their part or a lack of interest in their employee’s work. Another key tool that the participants felt supervisors could have used more often, or at all, is recognition. Letting employees know that their work is noticed, appreciated, and valued was something the women felt was extremely

important to their motivation and overall job performance. As far as career advancement was concerned, the participants felt that being challenged by their supervisors allowed them to grow. They also felt that being given arduous assignments and goals while providing support when needed was the best way that supervisors helped them develop professionally.

Relationship with supervisor. Many of the experiences the participants shared related to this theme of having a relationship with their supervisor, but with several variations. Some of the comments had to do with a feeling of being taken advantage of, while others fell into a category of whether or not the supervisor seemed to like them. Some participants made mention of what they perceived to be differential treatment between female and male employees. In addition, many participants felt their supervisors viewed them as competition or felt threatened by their presence because of a fear of being replaced.

Feeling of being taken advantage of. Beth was very open with her supervisor about her desire to move up in their company. But, ultimately, she felt that her frankness about her desire for a promotion was a mistake because it allowed her supervisor to take advantage of her ambition. Beth said, “In thinking back, I shouldn’t have been so honest by telling her I moved here for this opportunity. Because I was so upfront, it kind of backfired and she dangled it” (personal communication, April 4, 2011). Beth suspected her supervisor kept promising her a promotional opportunity so that she would continue working hard, which ultimately worked in her supervisor’s favor. Beth added, “They’re pushing us to perform so that they, in turn, can get their bonus. We met our branch goal for 12 months, and she got all the honors” (personal communication, April 4, 2011).

Emily had a similar feeling about her supervisor. She felt the pressure to do well so that her supervisor could benefit monetarily. Emily stated, “She tends to view her employees as how they can help her. She wasn’t so much concerned with employees advancing as with them meeting their quota and making bonuses so that she would make her bonus” (personal communication, January 30, 2011). In the interior design firm where Debbie worked, there was no question they were there to work, and their supervisor benefited from it. Debbie declared, “She would definitely take credit” (personal communication, January 18, 2011). Debbie’s supervisor also made sure she was visible and her employees were not because, as Debbie mentioned, “She was the main client communicator, and we were the back of the house designers” (personal communication, January 18, 2011).

Feeling taken advantage of was something that Frida discussed at length. Frida argued, “She knew I was a very valuable employee, but I don’t feel like she wanted me to get any exposure. I did all of the work, but she was the ‘face’ so everybody would go to her” (personal communication, December 21, 2010). Frida summed her feelings up by saying, “I did the work, but she wanted the spotlight” (personal communication, December 21, 2010). Although Holly had great admiration for her supervisor’s knowledge and abilities, it was clear to her that she was being used to get the bulk of the work done. Holly revealed, “I think I was kind of a worker bee for her. I dove right in and just started doing it. It always seemed like when we got down to one of those crunch times, she would get sick” (personal communication, August 26, 2010).

She likes me, she likes me not. Based on the researcher’s experience, any kind of relationship has shades of complexity to it, and a relationship with a supervisor seems to

be no different according to the participants' comments in this study. For several participants, their relationship with their supervisor changed, sometimes on a daily basis and sometimes according to the situation. For Beth who had moved to a new city in order to take a job she thought had some upward mobility, she found her supervisor to be nurturing when it came to her personal life; her supervisor would oftentimes take her out to dinner or try to fix her up on dates. According to Beth, "She tried to be a motherly figure. She was very nice . . . on a personal level" (personal communication, April 4, 2011). Yet, professionally, Beth felt abandoned and in the way. Beth said, "When I would ask her a question, she didn't have the time" (personal communication, April 4, 2011). According to Debbie, the woman who owned the design firm where she worked was unpredictable in terms of her personality. Debbie explained, "The days she was there it was more panic-stricken; there was always anxiety when she was going to be in the office. She was angry at times, would yell . . . She was not nice" (personal communication, January 18, 2011). On the other hand, Debbie admitted that the owner seemed to admire her style and her work, and she made sure all of her employees were well-compensated. Debbie claimed, "She paid her employees well, but I don't think she respected them" (personal communication, January 28, 2011).

Emily was not sure whether her supervisor liked her or not because her supervisor did not take the time to get to know her. According to Emily, "She focuses on your numbers and how we can get our numbers up" (personal communication, January 30, 2011). Emily also said it was a big switch from her previous supervisor's style: "Everything changed from people and words to numbers and dollars" (personal communication, January 30, 2011). Moreover, Emily felt her supervisor's focus was not

on trying to like or be liked by her employees, her focus was on herself. Emily stated, “I see her as an ‘I have to win’ person. She wants money, and she wants to win in conflict” (personal communication, January 30, 2011).

Both Frida and Gretchen felt their bosses lacked warmth when it came to interacting with them. Frida commented, “She didn’t take me into her arms like somebody did for her and say, ‘I want you to learn. I want you to be successful. I want you to be here forever’” (personal communication, December 21, 2010). But while she was not particularly warm or helpful, Frida admitted that she was not actively hostile, which was not the case with Gretchen and her boss. At a law firm, Gretchen mentioned that it is typical to have the young attorneys do a lot of research and administrative work, but she felt her supervisor would deliberately make life hard for her. She recounted an experience where she had spent weeks putting together a huge binder full of research in detailed order for an upcoming case. Her supervisor took it all apart, mixed up the pages, handed it back to her, and told her to put it back together again. Then she told Gretchen, “When you’re an attorney and you have a firm, then you can do whatever you want and have somebody fix it” (personal communication, December 21, 2010).

Differential treatment. A couple of the participants who had male colleagues mentioned that they felt their female supervisors seemed to favor their male employees over their female ones. Cathy felt her male colleague received preferential treatment because her supervisor often gave him the public recognition that she denied Cathy. Cathy stated, “At first I thought she just didn’t like me, but I don’t think there was anything not to like . . . It’s funny because she let David get recognition, and she always called on David. And David and I were colleagues” (personal communication, February

23, 2011). Cathy went on to say that David was also good at flattering their supervisor. She explained, “He was really good at working her. He was a handsome man and more comparable in age, maybe a little younger. He knew how to make her feel like she was really something special” (personal communication, February 23, 2011).

In Gretchen’s experience, the difference in the way she and her male colleague were treated by their supervisor was glaring. She said, “With me it was competitive and with him it just wasn’t competitive” (personal communication, December 21, 2010). She also talked about the difficulties she had trying to get her supervisor to help her or answer questions for her, which was something her male colleague never seemed to have to deal with. Gretchen expressed the following:

With him, I didn’t see him ever having those kinds of conflicts with her, having that feeling that he was being put off or having difficulty getting answers to questions. He was able to get information from her much more easily than I was. (personal communication, December 21, 2010)

Fear of being replaced. Many of the participants perceived their supervisors as fearful of losing their job or having their employee climb above them on the corporate ladder, which resulted in what they described as competitive behavior. Cathy, for example, believed her boss limited her development and withheld recognition for things she did well. Cathy said, “By giving me too much information she might have given me too much exposure. Maybe she struggled to get where she was and no one was going to be there to compete with her” (personal communication, February 23, 2011). Cathy also felt the way she looked made her supervisor feel threatened. Cathy added, “I was a cute, young thing back then and got lots of compliments, and maybe she didn’t like that” (personal communication, February 23, 2011). Cathy brought up the fact that their company was run almost exclusively by men and speculated that this may have

contributed to her supervisor's competitive behavior. She stated, "Leadership of that company was about 90% men and she did feel threatened. I always felt she was defensive or protective of what she did" (personal communication, February 23, 2011). Cathy is also bilingual and her supervisor was not. So when she came up with suggestions regarding dairy promotions with Latino radio and television stations, they were dismissed because those ideas would have given her too much exposure. Cathy speculated, "Well, I could possibly get recognition, possibly get promoted, possibly eliminate her job" (personal communication, February 23, 2011).

Similarly, Debbie believed her supervisor felt threatened by her and the other employees, even though Debbie's supervisor was the owner of the design firm and had many years of experience. Debbie said, "I think she was afraid we would take over" (personal communication, January 18, 2011). Debbie also speculated that her supervisor's tendency to withhold information stemmed from fear: "If she opened up too much or gave out too much information, she was afraid you would take her client and go open your own firm" (personal communication, January 18, 2011).

For Frida, her supervisor's attitude toward her seemed to change after Frida completed her bachelor's degree. She felt her supervisor's lack of a degree contributed to the way she began to discourage Frida's development. Frida declared, "I don't want to use the word 'jealous,' but I really felt like there was something there. She saw me on the rise and she . . . I felt like I couldn't go any further" (personal communication, December 21, 2010). Frida also mentioned that her supervisor got divorced around this same time period and thought that her situation may also have contributed to her fear of being replaced. She said, "Maybe it had to do with . . . now that she had to take care of her and

her children, she didn't want to feel threatened in her position" (personal communication, December 21, 2010).

Gretchen's supervisor became threatened and competitive over time; she did not start out that way. Gretchen explained:

When I first started and was uncertain about whether I would stay there or move on, she was a little more open and kind of mentorish. But when I was nearing the end of my bar studying, she was like, "This isn't a good place to stay, and you should start looking somewhere else." (personal communication, December 21, 2010)

While it made no sense to Gretchen, she definitely felt the woman began to treat her differently. Gretchen stated, "I kind of had a feeling that it had reached the point of being competitive, and I couldn't understand why; she was a partner in the firm, and I was simply an associate working there" (personal communication, December 21, 2010). Gretchen concluded that it may have had to do with the woman's desire to keep her special status: "If they're the only female attorney there, they kind of prefer that status and don't really want to have a person to compete with" (personal communication, December 21, 2010).

Acts of paranoia led Holly to surmise that her supervisor was afraid she was going to take her job. Holly revealed the following:

It's almost like she wanted to restrict my contact in the company to just her. I could pass the president in the hallway and say, "Hey, Jim. How ya doing?" and it would be, "What were you talking to Jim about? I know you were talking about me!" It got to be a difficult, tough situation. (personal communication, August 26, 2010)

As was the case with Gretchen, Debbie, and Frida, Holly's supervisor was also a knowledgeable person, but she felt the woman might have resented her productivity and her interpersonal skills. Holly explained:

I'm a pretty cheerful person, and I usually get along with a lot of people. And I think, for her, because she had some barriers that she threw up, that she felt threatened—not necessarily from what I knew but probably from what I could produce and getting along with people. (personal communication, August 26, 2010)

Holly noticed that people began coming to her for things, and she thinks her supervisor noticed and became worried. Holly said, “Maybe if I was a more pleasant person for them to deal with, maybe they would put me into her position. That’s all I can suppose” (personal communication, August 26, 2010).

Unlike many of the other participants, Janice did not feel that her supervisor was threatened or fearful that she would replace her, but she attributed that to their age gap. Janice suggested the following:

Had I been the same age, I don’t think that I would have been successful with her. But because I was so much younger, I think that she knew that she knew more and was more experienced. So, you know, she was willing to kind of help—probably made her look kind of good too. (personal communication, February 26, 2011)

Had she been older and more experienced, Janice felt her supervisor’s willingness to help her develop may not have happened at all since her supervisor showed signs of being an ambitious person. Janice acknowledged, “I knew she was trying to climb the ladder, and she was a workaholic . . . I think that had I been closer to her age and as knowledgeable, she would have seen it as a possible threat” (personal communication, February 26, 2011).

In conclusion, the participants spent a great deal of time talking about their relationship with their supervisors. Many felt their supervisors used them in order to make themselves look good, to gain undeserved credit, and even to profit monetarily. The way that the supervisors related to their employees was described in wildly, diverse

ways—from positive and mentor-like to indifferent and distant to purposefully hostile. For those participants who had male coworkers, they felt that their supervisors favored the male employees by sharing more information with them and being more available to them. Many of the women attributed their supervisor's competitive behavior toward them to a fear of being replaced. In some cases, this feeling was caused by the supervisors' lack of encouragement when their employees wanted to learn new skills, while in another case a participant related how her supervisor tried to encourage her to find a job elsewhere. Still another participant said that her supervisor became so threatened by her that she actively tried to sabotage her work, almost causing the company thousands of dollars in the process. Ultimately, it was the perceived relationship between the participant and her supervisor that was the main reason why the participant prospered and rose in her profession or was the catalyst causing her to leave her job: either to move to another department, to change companies, or even to change industries. Although one of the participants spoke of a positive, mentor-like relationship with her former supervisor that still exists today, the vast majority of the women spoke of negative experiences when reporting to a female supervisor. Whether they attributed the discord to personality issues, competitiveness, or fear, the end result was that nine out of 10 women felt stifled or ignored, with little or no opportunities for development. Most significantly, all 10 participants felt there was a direct link between their relationship with their supervisor and either their climb up the corporate ladder or their stagnant career.

Chapter 5: Discussion and Conclusion

The purpose of this study was to explore the perceptions female employees, working in Corporate America, have about their relationship with female supervisors and how they believe it affects their career advancement. This qualitative study drew on the individual accounts of the lived experiences of 10 women, ranging in age from 22 to 44, who worked in diverse professions including retail, finance, real estate, and telecommunications. Although they primarily lived in the Southwestern part of the United States, some participants also worked in the West and Northwest regions of the country. Face-to-face interviews were conducted to gather the data for this study with questions derived from a previously created protocol. A tape recorder was used to record the interviews, which were then later transcribed.

Themes

The analysis of the participant interviews yielded consistent themes, which fell into three different categories: (a) participant expectations for themselves and their supervisors, (b) tools they needed to be successful, and (c) their relationship with their supervisor.

Expectations for themselves and supervisors. In general, it was found that these women believed in taking responsibility for their own learning and, across the board, expressed a willingness to do what was necessary to get ahead. For some participants, this meant pursuing additional degrees or certifications, working long hours, or asking lots of questions. For others, it meant moving to a new area—departmental or geographical—where more opportunities existed. However, the participants also felt that they could not be successful without the assistance of their supervisors. They expected

their supervisors to be accessible and approachable. They also expected their supervisors to willingly take on a mentor-like role where they would form a relationship with their employee and share their knowledge and lessons learned while giving them opportunities to develop their skill sets. For the one participant who felt her supervisor fulfilled these expectations, she credited the woman for a large part of her success today and spoke of their on-going relationship, although they no longer work together. For the rest of the participants, they felt that their supervisors fell short in some or all of their expectations; for many, it was these unfilled expectations that led them to leave their job.

Tools they need to succeed. The tools participants felt they needed to be successful had little to do with physical things, such as equipment or things that would cost the company money. In fact, the tools mentioned involved only the supervisor's time and attention. These fell into the areas of giving challenging assignments or projects, delivering constructive feedback, doling out encouragement, seeking opportunities to give recognition, and sharing their knowledge with their employee. Once again, the vast majority of the study participants felt their supervisors either knowingly or in ignorance withheld these tools from them, and it was this paucity of assistance that they pointed to when explaining why they felt career advancement was not happening or even possible.

Relationship with supervisor. The participants focused heavily on how they perceived their relationship with their supervisor and how they felt that impacted their jobs. While the reasons varied, all but one of the participants described their relationship with their supervisors as less than satisfactory. Some participants felt they had a busy supervisor who had little time or inclination to spend with them and little or no interest in developing their job skills. For others, the relationship was tainted by their perception

that their supervisor was threatened by them in some way, or they felt their supervisor preferred to interact with male employees. In addition, some women felt their skills and talents were merely used by their supervisor in order to benefit monetarily or simply look good in front of executives. Regardless of the reason, all the participants felt that their relationship with their direct supervisor was the main reason why their career either flourished or stalled.

Discussion

There are several areas of note that came out of the findings as related to the existing literature on women and women as leaders: (a) women as transformational leaders, (b) women as learners, (c) women competing with other women, and (d) women opting out of corporate jobs.

Women as transformational leaders. Burns (1978) was the first to identify and define the transformational style of leadership as a style that involves a leader who acts like a role model by gaining the trust and confidence of his or her followers. This kind of leader is also said to be focused on mentoring and encouraging employees to develop their potential so they can contribute to the organization in a more meaningful way (Eagly, 2007). Prior studies have found women to be transformational leaders whose strengths are reported to be their ability to form intimate relationships with others and to be nurturing, supportive, and encouraging supervisors to their employees (Eagly, 2007; Eagly & Carli, 2009; Marques, 2011; Ryan & Haslam, 2007). Miller also found that social connections that came from building and maintaining relationships were what mattered most as a sign of status to women, while self-worth for men came from their position in the hierarchy of their organization (as cited in Anderson & Hayes, 1996). In

this researcher's study, however, there was little evidence to support the belief that women use the transformational style of leadership. Furthermore, the majority of the findings did not support the view that women leaders seek to create relationships with their employees, or at least not positive ones. Nine of the 10 participants described their relationship with their supervisor as cold, competitive, manipulative at worst, and nonexistent at best. Only one woman described her supervisor as warm and supportive. Interestingly, though, all of the women spoke of their desire to have a nurturing and supportive supervisor. A couple of them even mentioned that they had had a preconceived notion that a female leader would have those qualities, but all but one of the participants were disappointed that that expectation did not come to fruition.

Women as learners. The women in this study all portrayed themselves to be self-starters: women who would look for any opportunity to learn something new that would help them grow professionally. In almost all cases, these women looked to their supervisor to pass on knowledge to them directly or to provide tasks, assignments, or projects where they could learn experientially. This desire is supported by the literature, which points out that women learn best in a relational way. Jordan, Kaplan, Miller, Stiver, and Surrey (1991) wrote about the difference between how women learn and the classic developmental theory which involves a person's gradual separation from another person's influences as they move toward more and more independent thought. Jordan et al. (1991) found that "without recognition of the importance of relationships to women, we do not help women to find a path that leads them to growth and development" (p. 22). And Marques (2011) stated that women's interconnectedness with others is essential to their desire for leadership development, since they are not interested in power for power's

sake. Instead, she said most women wish to learn and grow so that they can attain leadership opportunities which allow them, in turn, to help others. This approach involves a win-win-win perspective where not only do they progress, but everyone around them benefits as well. Women's desire to learn and advance in their careers is rooted in their desire to grow (Storvik, 2012; Turner, Barling, Epitropaki, Butcher, & Milner, 2002) and to what Ionescu (2012) called their "complex moral reasoning" that spurs women to pursue goals that are not tied to self-interest but to those that serve the collective good (p. 156).

In terms of learning style, listening and learning from someone as part of a relationship is particularly important for how some women learn. For these women, listening is an active experience as they take in information and then try to make sense of it (Belenky, Clinchy, Goldberger, & Tarule, 1986). This relates to the findings of an early study by Steinem (1981) who observed that women are encouraged to be listeners, while men are encouraged to speak up. This observation was confirmed by Wooley and Malone (2011) who claimed that because of cultural conditioning or biology, women tend to be much better listeners than men and are much less likely than men to speak up, share opinions, and dominate group discussions. Elsesser and Lever (2011) also noted that women leaders were judged unfavorably when they spoke up in a direct manner but received positive reviews when employees reported that their female leader listened and empathized with them, causing them to feel understood.

In this study, many of the participants mentioned the desire to be understood and to learn by having a relationship with their supervisor. These women were not looking for a friendship, but they felt they would acquire the most information by having a

relationship with a supervisor that would (a) listen, (b) show an interest in their personal career goals, and (c) offer feedback, advice, suggestions, lessons learned, and so forth. In some cases, the participants had pursued independent learning experiences by reading, going to school, or going to conferences, but it was clear that they felt those methods of learning were less important than the lessons they could gain through a close relationship with their superior.

To expand on the idea of relationships as it pertains to learning, the circumstances connected to learning also play a role in women's development. In their study on how women experience education, Belenky et al. (1986) found that a woman's way of knowing has been mostly overlooked in educational theories, and, unlike men, women learn best when they understand the relationship between knowledge and its surrounding circumstances. According to Belenky et al. (1986), "We have learned a great deal about the development of autonomy and independent, abstract critical thought. We have learned less about the development of interdependence, intimacy, nurturance and contextual thought" (p. 6). They further discussed how women use contextual thought to resolve conflicts, seeking resolutions by keeping in mind the circumstances that a person is bringing to the situation (Belenky et al., 1986).

A related concept to contextual thought is the role that empathy plays in how women learn. Little girls are encouraged to understand and relate to the needs and feelings of other people. This development of empathy starts early where, even as children, girls want to understand and be understood (Jordan et al., 1991). More recently, Degges-White (2011) found that girls are born with the ability to form social connections: "It's as if we're driven to find a place of belonging and a sense of

community from the moment we enter the human race” (p. 7). Other studies show that the display of empathy and compassion by female leaders is what sets them apart from their male counterparts and is rated favorably by employees, while male leaders get higher marks for decisiveness (Kaifi & Noori, 2011; Stroope & Hagemann, 2011).

Throughout this study’s participant interviews, there were many elements of empathetic and contextual thought at play. No matter what type of relationship the women had with their female supervisors, the participants attempted to explain, justify, or merely understand their behaviors. This is not to say that they would excuse or even find some of the actions on the part of the supervisors forgivable, but there seemed to be a sense that the participants knew why the behaviors occurred. They also seemed to understand the context in which the behaviors had occurred. For example, Beth felt used by her supervisor; her supervisor would gain big money bonuses based on Beth’s hard work and would give little to no recognition. Yet, Beth still seemed to understand the behavior. She explained how her supervisor was ambitious and that the only way to move up in their organization was to continue to reach and exceed financial goals, which she needed her employees to help her achieve. Holly’s supervisor tried to sabotage her career by purposely delaying the signing of an important contract, which her supervisor then blamed on Holly. Holly explained that her supervisor’s behavior was the result of an unbalanced personality and the woman’s fear that her employee was going to outshine her and that she would be replaced. Frida, who complained that her supervisor continually took credit for her work, gave her no public recognition, and discouraged her from developing herself professionally, also justified her supervisor’s behavior. She said the woman had just gone through a divorce and was probably feeling especially

vulnerable and fearful that someone would take her job, so attempts on her part to move up may have made her supervisor feel threatened.

Women competing with other women. This idea that a supervisor was limiting her employee's professional growth because they felt threatened by the possibility that they might be replaced or that the employee might be promoted above her, was echoed by several women in this study. While none had concrete proof that this was occurring, this feeling that their supervisor viewed them as competition was felt and discussed by many of the participants. According to Diller (2005), these feelings are rooted in fact:

The truth is competition at the workplace and elsewhere does exist among women. Youthful colleagues can be found working hard to climb the corporate ladder. Aging women guard their hard earned positions by using their honed skills and experience to their advantage. (p. 2)

Mooney (2006) affirmed that competition among women exists. But she also contended that if it is handled in a healthy manner, everyone wins by encouraging women to do their best job in a professional manner. Mooney further explained that the higher a woman is promoted within an organization, the fewer other women are at her same level, which can lead some women to feel threatened that others will be trying to take their job. In this study, several participants noted that in their organization there were few, if any, females in leadership positions other than their supervisor.

This idea that women compete with other women in the workplace was referred to by Klaus (2009) as the "pink elephant in the room that we pretend is not there" (p. 1). Examples of this competitive behavior are limiting access to important meetings, withholding information, and blocking opportunities to be visible to senior members of leadership (Klaus, 2009). Each of these actions were mentioned by participants in this study. They were asked to do work that their female supervisors took into meetings and

for which they claimed credit. They were also kept out of the loop when it came to information that could have helped them do their work better. And, in one instance, a participant was subjected to a dressing down by her supervisor for having a conversation with senior leaders.

Women opting out of corporate jobs. It is interesting to note that all of the participants in this study stayed a relatively short time in their positions before leaving the company: the length of time being 9 months to 5 years. While not all of the women who had a negative experience with their supervisor left Corporate America, several of the women reported that the lack of professional growth opportunities prompted them to leave their positions and either move to a job in the nonprofit world or become stay-at-home mothers. In one instance, a participant left her position to start her own business selling products out of her home. These findings are supported by research that reports an increasing number of women are opting out of corporate jobs. Burke and Vinnicombe (2005) pointed to the slow progress made by “talented, educated ambitious women” in advancing up the corporate ladder as the reason many women are becoming disenchanted with corporate culture (p. 2).

In this study, some of the participants commented on the lack of meaningful work they were being asked to do and the lack of opportunities to shine in front of senior leaders. Research shows these thoughts also contribute to a woman’s exodus from the corporate world. Claire, Hukai, and McCarty (2005) pointed to gender stereotypes about roles and responsibilities, a lack of mentors, and a limited number of visible job assignments as reasons why women are becoming fed up with the corporate work environment. They talked about the need for Corporate America to develop formal

mentoring programs to identify and cultivate high potential talent and to hold managers accountable for the professional growth of their employees (Claire, Hukai, & McCarty, 2005). Still other research shows women are turning to entrepreneurship, preferring to start their own businesses when they become frustrated by the “lack of flexibility and challenge, lack of role models and mentors, and failure of organizations to credit and reward women’s contributions” (Mattis, 2004, p. 1). In fact, recent Census Bureau data showed that women now head up 8.3 million companies in the United States, and the number of women-owned businesses is growing at 1.5 times the rate of all U.S. firms (American Express, n.d.; Bosse & Taylor, 2012).

Impact of Socialization

From one interview to the next, the women in this study (a) stated their expectations of how they felt a female leader should behave; (b) expressed a wide range of emotions from pleasure to disappointment, frustration, and anger when expectations were met or not met; and (c) made assumptions about why they felt they were treated a particular way by their female supervisors. Many of these comments and observations tied back to Bussy and Bandura’s (1999) social cognitive theory of gender role development. While some studies found that women were socialized as children to be sweet and kind (Lever, 1976), other studies found that women have learned to change to fit in with whatever organization they are immersed in (Eagly & Carli, 2009; Kanter, 1993; Marques, 2011; Reciniello, 2011). The majority of the participants also commented on their female supervisors’ detached nature, their ambition, and their lack of empathy and support. The question remains: Were these characteristics naturally a part of these

women's personalities, or did they assume these characteristics as a way to assimilate to the organizational culture where gender stereotypes still exist?

Women today are faced with what Eagly and Carli (2009) described as a “double bind” where women are expected to be warm and relational because of their gender. Being warm and relational are traits that are not seen as leader-like, so women are criticized when they display the male gender traits of confidence and assertiveness. In this study, the participants were asked what they expected a female leader to be like, and many of them envisioned someone who would be empathetic, nurturing, and supportive in terms of their professional development. And they were disillusioned when they felt their supervisors did not live up to these expectations. One participant, however, expected her female leader to be cold and competitive because that was the reputation that female lawyers had, due to the tough road they had to navigate to get to their positions in a male-dominated profession.

Mizrahi (2004) concluded that female leaders do not get the same level of respect as their male counterparts, so they may turn to more coercive and controlling measures with their subordinates in order to get them to produce the same way they would for a male supervisor. Consider the words of former Hewlett-Packard CEO Carly Fiorina, who once complained, “I was routinely referred to as either a ‘bimbo’ or a ‘bitch’—too soft or too hard” (Fiorina, 2006, p. 173). While none of the participants in this study portrayed their female leaders as “soft,” several of them gave examples of what they felt were controlling behaviors on the part of their supervisors. In some cases, the control took the form of limiting the scope of work they would allow their subordinates to do. In other cases, the participants felt micromanaged when it came to the work that they did and

when it came to who they were allowed to speak to. Whether or not these behaviors can be attributed to the leaders' belief that this management style was needed to get their employees to do their work successfully was not explored in this study.

Ultimately, it seems that the gender socialization that we undergo as children is still being seen in the workplace today where females are encouraged to continue to behave in gender stereotypical ways. Even in today's world, people still expect and prefer that women behave in ways that are traditionally feminine, such as showing warmth, kindness, and concern for others. Men, on the other hand, are viewed favorably when they display traditionally masculine traits, such as confidence, assertiveness, and decisiveness. Since stereotypes about leaders tend to be more closely tied to stereotypes of men, this presents a barrier for women who aspire to be leaders (Duehr & Bono, 2006; Eagly & Karau, 2002).

However, it also presents an opportunity for current female leaders to change the way that they develop their female employees into future female leaders; they need to break down the stereotypes of gender and leaders that both men and women continue to hold onto. According to Friedman and Yorio (2006), it is more important than ever that female bosses take on the role of mentor for their female employees. Their message to female leaders was to be aware of their own gender stereotypes: "Encourage your female employees to contribute and speak up, support their professional growth and development right along with your male reports. You have the opportunity to be the agent of change in your employees' lives" (Friedman & Yorio, 2006, p. 213).

Implications

With rapid changes going on in the world from technological advances to the globalization of business and an increasingly diverse workforce, the definition of good leadership is undergoing a change as well. Many studies and articles discuss the need for leaders that are more future-oriented with a style that elicits followers' commitment and motivation to think more creatively (Avolio, 1999; Bass, 1998; Eagly, 2007). Businesses today no longer progress under old school, autocratic-style leadership. Marques (2011) stated:

Leaders of this day and age need to develop and display more of the right-brain oriented skills that have been downplayed so gravely in the past century: more empathy, less autocracy, more stakeholder inclusion, less short term profit; more feeling, less ruling, and more of that nature. (p. 23)

Instead of being a boss, leaders are asked to be a coach, someone who is capable of teaching rather than simply telling others what to do (Chin, 2004; Eagly, 2007; Sokolove, 2006). This can be seen in the expansion of Mike Krzyzewski's career. He went from being a successful Duke University basketball coach to an in-demand leadership lecturer. It makes sense, then, that a society that values a transformative leader who is able to coach, mentor, and nurture effective teams should value the collaborative and participative elements depicted by Chin (2004) as "feminist" leadership.

According to Feldt (2012), now is the time for women to ascend into more and more key leadership roles as words such as "consensual, relational, caring, inclusive, open, and transparent" are used to describe desired leadership attributes (p. 18). And, in truth, when more women are included in executive or board positions, companies make more money (Reciniello, 2011). So, in order for more women to ascend into the ranks of leadership, it calls for more women leaders to portray the transformational leadership

traits of listening, supporting, motivating, and mentoring. The women in this study confirmed that is what they need from their female supervisors so that they, too, can develop and grow into future female leaders.

However, in order to develop women and promote them into the leadership ranks, one has to consider the organizational trust that exists within the company.

Organizational trust, as explained by Covey (2008), has to do with alignment and ensuring that the values and behaviors of leaders are reflected in the structures and systems within an organization. In other words, if a CEO talks about the importance of developing leaders from within the company, and a core company value is that employees are the number one asset, then organizational trust would exist if there were systems in place to recognize the importance of employees and the development of their leadership potential. As part of their performance review, for example, supervisors might be evaluated on how well they were helping their employees succeed.

Related to organizational trust is organizational justice, which has to do with the perceived fairness of interpersonal interactions and treatment as well as the fairness of outcomes within the organization (Van den Bos, Wilke, & Lind, 1998). Organizational justice could be compromised if an employee feels they were unfairly overlooked for a promotion or a perception that only men were being groomed for executive positions. Whatever the level of trust or justice within an organization, it is still in the hands of the supervisor to make decisions about how they will interact with their employees. The supervisor must decide whether or not they will make the effort to develop their female employees' potential and whether or not they will push for advancement opportunities for those women who are qualified to move to the next level.

But how do we go about developing these women who are hungry for knowledge and driven to advance in their careers? First of all, any development plan begins with knowledge on the leader's part that growing a future leader is going to require time on their part. The findings from this study highlighted the desire for female leadership that is relational in nature where time is spent in sharing information with female employees: information that is in the form of feedback, recognition for efforts or achievements, shared past experiences, or simply job knowledge. Women's ability to listen and understand context allows them not only to take in information from others but also to actively make sense of it, coming to their own conclusions based on what is said, how it is said, and why it is said.

Another aspect of a development plan includes the examination of a person's personality preferences and style. The idea that leaders are born began in the late 1800s and continued until the mid-1940s. During this time, it was commonly held that leaders came into this world with special traits that allowed them to influence and lead others (Nahavandi, 2006). Although later theorists discarded this idea as being too simplistic, the belief that traits are at least part of the leadership equation still remains. Kirkpatrick and Locke (1991) explored this idea further and came up with a list of traits that allow people to gain the skills necessary to be an effective leader: drive, desire, honesty, integrity, self-confidence, and intelligence. Personality also comes into play when it comes to how we think and how we make decisions. These are traits that can be measured through the Myers-Briggs Type Indicator (MBTI) test, which is one of the most widely used personality assessments used in organizations for the purpose of leadership development (Caggiano, 1998).

But personality traits alone are not enough to become an effective leader. When interviewing the heads of several top companies for their article on leadership development, McDermott, Kidney, & Flood (2011) found that the leaders credited critical incidents in their early careers, such as mentorship and key learning experiences, as the reason for their career advancement. In addition, Day (2001) stated that to develop an effective leader requires a competence in intrapersonal relationships with a focus on things such as self-awareness, self-regulation, self-motivation, and an understanding that relational dialogue, rather than a reliance on positional power, is what motivates employees to follow. With these ideas in mind and the understanding of how women prefer to learn relationally and contextually, it is recommended that female leaders consider the following elements in a development plan for those women they supervise who express the desire to move up to a leadership position or in whom the supervisors see leadership potential.

Building a relationship and defining goals. Many of this study's participants stated that spending time with their supervisor was important if they were to successfully move up the career ladder. These meetings (conducted on a weekly, biweekly, or monthly basis) could be spent discussing professional goals, lessons the supervisor had learned during the course of their career, or ideas for ongoing projects. Early conversations should focus on the employee's short- and long-term professional goals. The short-term goals, in particular, should be specific and measurable so that both the employee and supervisor can monitor progress and tweak the goals if warranted. The long-term goals may be more general (i.e., I would like to move into a supervisor role in the next 2 years). Regardless of the scope of the goal or the specificity of it, merely discussing the career

interests and aspirations of the employee is essential. The supervisor must know where the employee sees herself going in order to provide her with opportunities to grow and develop in that direction.

Assessing personality preferences and strengths. In this study, some of the participants found themselves doing work that was uninteresting and unchallenging or work that simply did not make use of their skill sets. But, there were also some participants that were doing tasks or projects that allowed them to use their strengths, and the quality of the work they produced allowed them to shine. In order for a supervisor to assign work that is motivating to the employee and will allow them to contribute the most productively to the company, it is wise for the supervisor to have the employee take at least two assessments: the Myers-Briggs Type Indicator (MBTI) and the Strengthsfinder. As stated earlier, the MBTI looks at the personality preferences of an individual and breaks them down into categories, such as extraversion versus introversion, thinking versus feeling, intuiting versus sensing, and judging versus perceiving. The self-knowledge that comes from knowing their preferences can help an employee throughout her career. For example, if the employee knows that they are a clear sensor—someone who sees things in a black and white, practical way—they may consciously seek out those with a more intuitive bent when working on a project that calls for out-of-the-box thinking or a more creative way of doing things. This information will also be helpful to the supervisor when giving their employee feedback on their interpersonal skills. If an employee is known to be an introvert, the supervisor may work with her to strengthen her public speaking skills so that she may be more comfortable when presenting her ideas in front of a group. The supervisor may also use that information to give the employee

advanced notice of a question or a problem that she is looking to solve so that the employee may have time to think and process the information and be ready to offer ideas when the team is called together to brainstorm.

The Strengthsfinder assessment, created by Buckingham and Clifton (2001), allows a person's top five strengths to be identified. The definition of a strength is something that someone not only has a talent for but also something that energizes them and motivates them (Buckingham & Clifton, 2001). When a supervisor has this knowledge, it allows them to seek out assignments that will allow the employee to do their best work while motivating them to go above and beyond just doing their job. The information gained by doing the MBTI and the Strengthsfinder will be invaluable to the supervisor but will also provide self-awareness for the employee, which is one of the keys to leader development (Day, 2001).

Creating development opportunities and assessing readiness. It is easy to get caught up in the day-to-day tasks or be distracted by the crisis de jour. But if a supervisor truly wants to develop their employee, it takes a conscious effort to look for or create opportunities that will allow them to expand their skill sets and increase their visibility in the organization. There are many ways to do this:

- Expand the scope of the employee's job to include higher level responsibilities.
- Provide authority to allow the employee to make more decisions.
- Provide access to important meetings.
- Assign the employee team leader responsibilities.
- Allow the employee to cross-train in areas outside the scope of their work.
- Allow the employee to play a role in executive presentations.

- Provide the employee with internal and external training programs.
- Ask the employee to provide training for other employees with information they gained at a seminar.

However, before a supervisor charges ahead with any of these ideas, it is essential to assess the readiness of the employee to undertake a particular development opportunity. It will only waste everyone's time and lead to frustration on both the supervisor and employee's part if an opportunity is thrust upon the employee when she is not interested in taking it on. To assess an employee's readiness in taking on a particular development assignment or role, do the following:

- Clarify the scope of the assignment or responsibility.
- Ask the employee for questions or suggestions.
- Guide the employee as they map out a course of action.
- Assure continued support by setting up follow-up meetings.

Once these things are done, the supervisor should have a good idea of whether or not her employee is up for the challenge. However, it is important to note that just because an employee declines to take on one opportunity, this does not mean she is not interested in development. It may simply mean that the assignment selected was not one that held any interest for the employee, or she may have lacked confidence in her ability to perform the assignment successfully.

Providing ongoing feedback and recognition. Finally, no development plan would be complete without planning to meet regularly with employees to give them feedback on their performance and to recognize their efforts and achievements. The participants in this study spoke of the need to meet with their supervisors in order to get

direction from them, to hear how they were doing on a particular project, or to get information on what their next steps should be. Since it is easy to have good intentions about meeting with employees to go over projects only to have those discussions go by the wayside, supervisors should schedule feedback sessions with their employees the same way they would schedule any other important meeting. Whether it be a weekly, biweekly, or monthly check-in meeting or a quarterly review of performance goals, it is imperative that female employees have that time with their supervisors in order to receive and process information that is critical to their development and advancement. The employee should be encouraged to ask questions since some women will be hesitant to let their supervisor know they are unsure about something, fearing that their lack of knowledge will reflect poorly on their performance. In addition, supervisors should be mindful of the type of feedback they are giving. Is it always constructive to refer to performance that did not measure up? Are there meetings where the only feedback given is positive, rather than a “sandwich” approach where the supervisor starts out with a positive comment only to negate it by saying “but” and continuing on with negative comments before concluding with another positive comment?

Positive feedback also relates to recognition, but there is a difference between praising an employee and giving them meaningful recognition. The majority of the women in this study spoke of their desire for recognition from their supervisor, and they were open about their resentment when they felt recognition was withheld or simply not thought of at all. Recognition, to an employee, means more than getting credit for something that they did. It means that the employee’s actions had value. When a supervisor takes the time to tell an employee what they did specifically that was

meaningful and how it impacted them, their group, or the entire organization, it does a couple of things. First, it lets the employee know that the supervisor noticed what they were doing. Second, it tells the employee what the supervisor considers valuable. The end result is that an employee will want to repeat that behavior or action and will look to find other ways to make a similar impact.

The elements in this development plan would be helpful for a supervisor to use when attempting to expand any employee's skills and abilities, but for female employees, the relational aspect of this approach will resonate in a profound way. When a supervisor spends the time getting to know their employees, shows interest in understanding their professional goals, and works to assist them in their development and career advancement, they become more than a supervisor; supervisors become advisors and mentors. If we are to increase the female presence in our leadership ranks and stop the flow of talented women who are feeling overlooked and underutilized from leaving corporate organizations, it will require their supervisors—both male and female—to recognize the importance of accepting and relishing these additional roles.

Recommendations for Further Research

This was a qualitative study that explored the experiences of 10 women and their perceptions regarding the impact their supervisors had on their professional growth. Therefore, it did not seek to come up with any generalizations that could be applied to a wider population. Further research could explore aspects of this study in different ways. Suggestions for future studies are the following: (a) a quantitative look at the specific supervisor qualities that contribute to or limit an employee's advancement; (b) a comparison of female and male supervisor behaviors, which are believed to contribute to

the career advancement of their female employees; (c) a case study of one female leader and all of her employees, looking at her specific leadership behaviors and how they correlate with the professional development of her employees; and (d) a qualitative study of men who have female supervisors and their perception of that relationship's impact on their professional development.

Conclusion

This study focused on the experiences of 10 women who aspired to advance in their careers in Corporate America, and they felt their female supervisors should have played a role in their professional development by mentoring them, providing them with learning experiences, and encouraging their ambitions. Through the narrative inquiry style, this study allowed these women to express in their own words the challenges they faced in their relationships with their supervisors, and it detailed their perceptions of how these female leaders helped or hindered them in their desire to get ahead. This study also highlighted the continued existence of gender stereotypes in the workplace. Whether it was the female participants' own expectations of how a female leader should nurture their employees' development and form warm relationships with them or whether it was the participants' explanations of why they felt their supervisors took on more male characteristics, it is clear that the idea of how a woman should behave at work is still current and future female leaders must contend with.

The literature shows that the world is changing at a rapid pace, and the need for more transformative leaders is at hand. If this is true, then it is important to develop our future female leaders in a way that emphasizes the importance of building relationships by providing developmental experiences that allow for collaboration, participative

problem-solving, and out-of-the box thinking. By refusing to help one another or, worse, actively working to stop the advancement of other women, we do our gender and our organizations a great disservice. Since the number of women in the workplace continues to grow, we will harm the overall productivity of our companies and their financial viability unless we learn how to have healthy, supportive relationships with one another. Mooney (2006) advised that instead of feeling threatened by other women, female leaders should be generous with their time and resources: "Behaving as if there's room enough for everyone is the fastest road toward making sure this becomes a reality" (p. 231). Through the collaborative efforts of both female supervisors and female employees, the power of women working together with a common goal will allow a larger female presence in the ranks of organizational leadership.

References

- American Express OPEN. (n.d.). *The state of women-owned businesses* [Infographic]. Retrieved from <http://mashable.com/2012/07/24/women-owned-businesses/>
- Anderson, D. Y. & Hayes, C. L. (1996). *Gender, identity, and self-esteem: A new look at adult development*. New York, NY: Springer Publishing.
- Angier, N. (1999). *Woman: An intimate geography*. New York, NY: Houghton Mifflin.
- Avolio, B. J. (1999). *Full leadership-development: Building the vital forces in organizations*. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.
- Bass, B. M. (1998). *Transformation leadership: Industrial, military, and educational impact*. Mahwah, NJ: Erlbaum.
- Belenky, M. F., Clinchy, B. M., Goldberger, N. R., & Tarule, J. M. (1986). *Women's ways of knowing: The development of self, voice, and mind*. New York, NY: Harper Collins.
- Bosse, D. A., & Taylor, P. L. (2012). The second glass ceiling impedes women entrepreneurs. *Journal of Applied Management and Entrepreneurship*, 17(1), 52–68.
- Briles, J. (1999). *Woman to woman*. Far Hills, NJ: New Horizons Press.
- Buckingham, M., & Clifton, D. O. (2001). *Now, discover your strengths*. New York, NY: Free Press.
- Burke, R., & Vinnicombe, S. (2005). Advancing women's careers. *Career Development International*, 10(3), 165–167, 260–262.
- Burns, J. M. (1978). *Leadership*. New York, NY: Harper & Row.
- Bussy, K., & Bandura, A. (1999). Social cognitive theory of gender development and differentiation. *Psychological Review*, 106(4), 676–713.

- Caggiano, C. (1998, July). Psycho path. *Inc.* Retrieved from
http://www.inc.com/magazine/19980701/963_pagen_2.html
- Catalyst. (2011). *Women in U.S. management.* Retrieved from
<http://www.catalyst.org/publication/206/women-in-us-management>
- Cavanaugh, B. (1999). Diversity at work: Women. *Nation's Restaurant News*, 33(21), 240-241.
- Chin, J. L. (2004). Feminist leadership: Feminist vision and diverse voices. *Psychology of Women Quarterly*, 28, 1-8.
- Claire, M. K., Hukai, D., & McCarty, C. E. (2005). Building diversity in the pipeline to corporate leadership. *Journal of Management Development* 24(2), 155–168.
- Clandinin, D. J., & Connelly, F. M. (2000). *Narrative inquiry: Experience and story in qualitative research.* San Francisco, CA: Jossey-Bass.
- Covey, S. M. (2008). *The speed of trust: The one thing that changes everything.* New York, NY: Free Press.
- Creswell, J. W. (2005). *Educational research: Planning, conducting, and evaluating quantitative and qualitative research.* Upper Saddle River, NJ: Pearson.
- Creswell, J. W. (2009). *Research design: Qualitative, quantitative, and mixed methods approaches* (3rd ed.). Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.
- Davison, H. K. & Burke, M. K. (2000). Sex and discrimination in simulated employment contexts: A meta-analytic investigation. *Journal of Vocational Behavior*, 56, 225-248.
- Day, D.V. (2001). Leadership development: A review in context. *Leadership Quarterly*, 11(4), 581-613.

- Degges-White, S. (2011). *Friends forever: How girls and women forge lasting relationships*. Lanham, MD: Rowman & Littlefield.
- Diller, V. (n.d.). *Female competition as we age: Who's the fairest one of all*. Retrieved from <http://www.psychologytoday.com/blog/face-it/201204/female-competition-we-age-whos-the-fairest-one-all>
- Duehr, E. E. & Bono, J. E. (2006). Men, women, and managers: Are stereotypes finally changing? *Personnel Psychology*, 59(4), 815-846.
- Eagly, A. H. (2007). Female leadership advantage and disadvantage: Resolving the contradictions. *Psychology of Women Quarterly*, 31(1), 1-12.
- Eagly, A. H. & Carli, L. L. (2003). The female leadership advantage: An evaluation of the evidence. *Leadership Quarterly*, 14, 807-834.
- Eagly, A. H. & Carli, L. L. (2009). Navigating the labyrinth. *The School Administrator*, 66(8), 10-16.
- Eagly, A. H. & Karau, S. J. (2002). Role congruity theory of prejudice toward female leaders. *Psychology Review*, 109, 573-598.
- Eby, L. T., Butts, M., Lockwood, A., & Simon, S. A. (2004). Protégés' negative mentoring experiences: Construct development and nomological validation. *Personnel Psychology*, 57(2), 411-447.
- Elsesser, K. M., & Lever, J. (2011). Does gender bias against female leaders persist? Quantitative and qualitative data from a large-scale survey. *Human Relations*, 64(12), 1555-1578.
- Feldt, G. (2012). Women leaders. *Leadership Excellence*, 29(3), 18-18.
- Fiorina, C. (2006). *Tough choices: A memoir*. New York, NY: Penguin.

- Fowler, J. L., Gudmundsson, A. J., & O’Gorman, J. G. (2007). The relationship between mentee-mentor gender combination and the provision of distinct mentoring functions. *Women in Management Review*, 22(8), 666–681.
- Friedman, C. & Yorio, K. (2006). *The girl’s guide to being a boss*. New York, NY: Morgan Road Books.
- Fritz, R. & Kennard, K. (1994). *How to manage your boss*. Hawthorne, NJ: Career Press.
- Gini, A. (2001). *My job, my self: Work and the creation of the modern individual*. London, England: Routledge.
- Goodwin, M. H., & Goodwin, C. (1987). Children’s arguing. In S. Philips, S. Steele, & C. Tanz (Eds.), *Language, gender, and sex in comparative perspective* (pp. 200–248). Cambridge, United Kingdom: Cambridge University Press.
- Greer, G. (1999). *The whole woman*. New York, NY: Random House.
- Heim, P., & Murphy, S. (2001). *In the company of women: Turning workplace conflict into powerful alliances*. New York, NY: Penguin Putnam.
- Ionescu, L. (2012). The role of women in bureaucracies: Leadership, democracy, and politics. *Economics, Management, and Financial Markets*, 7(1), 138–143.
- Jordan, J. V., Kaplan, A. G., Miller, J. B., Stiver, I. P., & Surrey, J. L. (1991). *Women’s growth in connection: Writings from the stone center*. New York, NY: Guilford.
- Kaifi, B. A., & Noori, S. A. (2011). Organizational behavior: A study on managers, employees, and teams. *Journal of Management Policy and Practice*, 12(1), 88–97.
- Kanter, R. M. (1993). *Men and women of the corporation*. New York, NY: Basic Books.

- Kirkpatrick, S. A., & Locke, E. A. (1991). Leadership: Do traits matter? *Academy of Management Executive*, 5(2), 48–60.
- Klaus, P. (2009, January 10). A sisterhood of workplace infighting. *The New York Times*. Retrieved from <http://www.nytimes.com/2009/01/11/jobs/11pre.html>
- Kram, K. E. (1985). *Mentoring at work: Developmental relationships in organizational life*. Glenview, IL: Scott Foresman.
- Krishnan, H. A., & Park, D. (2005). A few good women—on top management teams. *Journal of Business Research*, 58(12), 1712–1720.
- Lever, J. (1976). Sex differences in the games children play. *Social Problems*, 23(4), 478–487.
- Levinson, D. J. (1978). *The seasons of a man's life*. New York, NY: Random House.
- Marques, J. (2011). The female awakened leader: Connecting with the inner-sage. *Interbeing*, 5(2), 23–29.
- Marshall, C., & Rossman, G. B. (2006). *Designing qualitative research*. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.
- Mattis, M. C. (2004). Women entrepreneurs: Out from under the glass ceiling. *Women in Management Review*, 19(3), 154–163.
- Mavin, S. (2006a). Venus envy: Problematizing solidarity behavior and queen bees. *Women in Management Review*, 21(4), 264–276.
- Mavin, S. (2006b). Venus envy 2: Sisterhood, queen bees and female misogyny in management. *Women in Management Review*, 21(5), 349–364.

- McDermott, A., Kidney, R., & Flood, P. (2011). Understanding leader development: Learning from leaders. *Leadership & Organization Development Journal*, 32(4), 358-378.
- Merriam, S. B. (1998). *Qualitative research and case study applications in education*. San Francisco, CA: Jossey-Bass.
- Mizrahi, R. (2004, May). Hostility to the presence of women: Why women undermine each other in the workplace and the consequences for title VII. *The Yale Law Journal*, 113(7), 1579-1619.
- Mooney, N. (2006). *I can't believe she did that!: Why women betray other women at work*. New York, NY: St. Martin's Press.
- Nahavandi, A. (2006). *The art and science of leadership* (4th ed.). Upper Saddle River, NJ: Pearson.
- O'Leary, V. E., & Ryan, M. M. (1994). Women bosses: Changing the counts, counting the changes. In M. Tanton (Ed.), *Women in management: A developing presence* (pp. 63-78). London, England: Routledge.
- Pai, K., & Vaidya, S. (2006). Glass ceiling: Role of women in the corporate world. *Competition Forum*, 4(2), 421-426.
- Patton, M. Q. (2002). *Qualitative research & evaluation methods* (3rd ed.). Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.
- Politics 101 for women. (2006). *HR Magazine*, 51(6), 24-26.
- Pomeroy, A. (2007). Cultivating female leaders. *HR Magazine*, 52(2), 44-50.

- Raabe, B., & Beehr, T. A. (2003). Formal mentoring versus supervisor and coworker relationships: Differences in perceptions and impact. *Journal of Organizational Behavior, 24*(3), 271–293.
- Ragins, B. R. (1989). Barriers to mentoring: The female manager's dilemma. *Human Relations, 42*(1), 1–22.
- Ragins, B. R., & Cotton, J. L. (1991). Easier said than done: Gender differences in perceived barriers to gaining a mentor. *Academy of Management Journal, 34*(4), 939–951.
- Ragins, B. R., Cotton, J. L., & Miller, J. S. (2000). Marginal mentoring: The effects of type of mentor, quality of relationship, and program design on work and career attitudes. *Academy of Management Journal, 43*(6), 1177–1194.
- Reciniello, S. (2011). Is woman the future of man? An exploration of the potential of women in the knowledge economy and of the problem of gender inequality in the workplace. *Organizational and Social Dynamics, 11*(2), 151–174.
- Reissman, C. K. (1993). *Narrative analysis*. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.
- Roberts, A. (1999). The origins of the term mentor. *History of Education Society Bulletin, 64*, 313-329
- Rosser, M. H. (2005). Mentoring from the top: CEO perspectives. *Advances in Developing Human Resources, 7*(4), 527–539.
- Rudman, L. A. (1998). Self-promotion as a risk factor for women: The costs and benefits of counterstereotypical impression management. *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology, 74*(3), 629-645.

- Ryan, M. K., & Haslam, S. A. (2007). The glass cliff: Exploring the dynamics surrounding the appointment of women to precarious leadership positions. *Academy of Management Review*, 32(2), 549–572.
doi:10.5465/AMR.2007.24351856
- Schram, T. H. (2006). *Conceptualizing and proposing qualitative research*. Upper Saddle River, NJ: Pearson.
- Sokolove, M. (2006, February). Follow me. *New York Times Sports Magazine*, pp. 96–101.
- Steinem, G. (1981, May). The politics of talking in groups. *Ms.*, 9, 43–45.
- Storvik, A. E. (2012). Introducing the feminist management discourse in organizations. *Review of European Studies*, 4(1), 155–166.
- Stroope, S., & Hagemann, B. (2011). Women, water, + leadership: Are we making progress. *T + D*, 65(3), 50–53.
- Tanenbaum, L. (2002). *Catfight: Women and competition*. New York, NY: Seven Stories Press.
- Torrissi-Mokwa, J. (2006). The seven questions firm leaders need to ask to advance professional women more effectively. *CPA Practice Management Forum*, 2(12), 13–14.
- Townsend, B. (1997). Breaking through: The glass ceiling revisited. *Equal Opportunities International*, 16(5), 4–13.
- Turner, N., Barling, J., Epitropaki, O., Butcher, V., & Milner, C. (2002). Transformational leadership and moral reasoning. *Journal of Applied Psychology*, 87(2), 304–311.

Van den Bos, K., Wilke, H. A., & Lind, E. A. (1998). When do we need procedural fairness? The role of trust in authority. *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology*, 75(6), 1449–1458.

Wells, S. (2001). A female executive is hard to find. *HR Magazine*, 46(6), 40-49.

Woolley, A., & Malone, T. (2011). Defend your research: What makes a team smarter? More women. *Harvard Business Review*, 89(6), 32–33.

Appendix A

Application for Institutional Review Board Approval Form
University of the Incarnate Word

1. Title of Study: **Women Leading Women: Reinforcing the Glass Ceiling?**
2. Principal Investigator: **Marian Suarez**
[REDACTED]
3. Co-Investigator: **Dissertation Chair – Dr. Dorothy Ettling**
4. Division/Discipline: **Organizational Leadership**
5. Research Category: a. ☐ Exempt b. ☒ Expedited Review c. ☐ Full Board Review
6. Purpose of Study: **The purpose of this study is to explore how female corporate employees perceive their relationship with their female supervisors as it affects their career advancement (See Chapter 1).**
7. Number of Subjects: **10** Controls: ☐
8. Does this research involve any of the following:

	YES	NO		YES	NO
Inmates of penal institutions	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	Fetus in utero	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
Institutionalized mentally retarded	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	Viable fetus	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
Institutionalized mentally disabled	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	Nonviable fetus	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
Committed patients	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	Dead fetus	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
Mentally retarded outpatient	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	In vitro fertilization	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
Mentally disabled outpatient	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	Minors (under 18)	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
Pregnant women	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>			
9. For each "Yes", state what precautions you will use to obtain informed consent.
Duration of study: **1 year**
10. How is information obtained? (Include instruments used)
In-depth interviews will be conducted with each of the 10 study participants with the conversations taped (with participants' permission).
11. Confidentiality – Are data recorded anonymously? (☐ Yes ☒ No)
12. If #11 is answered "No", how will the study subjects' confidentiality be maintained?
In the study, the participants' names will be left out and replaced with pseudonyms. Also, the taped interviews will not mention the participants' names (see Chapter 3).
13. Benefit of research:
This study is important in that it will examine the relationship between women to see if there might be a connection between this dynamic and the continued existence of the glass ceiling phenomenon. There are a number of studies that have looked at this problem but few have explored the relationship between women as a possible influence in the continued existence of this barrier to career advancement (See Chapter 1).

Appendix B

Consent Form

SUBJECT CONSENT TO TAKE PART IN A STUDY OF "Women Leading Women: Reinforcing the Glass Ceiling?" University of the Incarnate Word

I am a graduate student at UIW working towards a doctorate degree in education with a concentration in organizational leadership. You are being asked to take part in a research study of the impact that having a female supervisor has on a professional woman's career advancement. We want to learn if females are being prevented from climbing the corporate ladder through the actions or inactions of their supervisors. You are being asked to take part in this study because you are a professional woman who has had a female supervisor at some point in your career.

If you decide to take part, we will have a conversation for about 30 minutes about your experience. The interview should not cause any inconvenience to you. The benefit may be that the information you give can contribute to the body of knowledge being collected about the factors that are contributing to the continued existence of the glass ceiling.

Everything we learn about you in the study will be confidential. If we publish the results of the study, you will not be identified in any way. Your decision to take part in the study is voluntary. You are free to choose not to take part in the study or to stop taking part at any time. If you choose not to take part or to stop at any time, it will not have a negative impact on you in any way. After a reasonable period of time after the conclusion of the study, all tapes used for transcriptions will be destroyed. Before they are destroyed they will be kept in a locked and secure location.

If you have questions now, feel free to ask me. If you have additional questions later or you wish to report a problem that may be related to this study, contact Dr. Dorothy Ettling at 210-829-2764. The University of the Incarnate Word committee that reviews research on human subjects, the Institutional Review Board, will answer any questions about your rights as a research subject. The number to call is 210-829-275 for the Dean of Graduate Studies and Research. You will be given a copy of this form to keep.

YOUR SIGNATURE INDICATES THAT YOU CONSENT TO TAKE PART IN THIS RESEARCH STUDY AND THAT YOU HAVE READ AND UNDERSTAND THE INFORMATION GIVEN ABOVE AND EXPLAINED TO YOU.

Signature of Subject

Signature of Witness

_____ *

Signature of University of Incarnate Word Instructor _____

Date: