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LEGACY OF WOMEN AND THE CULTURE OF AN ORGANIZATION

by

Nicole Kutsi

A dissertation submitted to the faculty of  
The Graduate School of Hamline University  
in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of

Doctorate of Public Administration

Hamline University

Chair: Kris Norman-Major

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### Abstract

The purpose of this paper is to explore women in executive leadership positions in traditionally male-dominated public-sector organizations. This research will determine whether women entering into these positions have the ability to change the culture of a traditionally male-dominated institution so that women are regarded as equals to men in leadership success, team-building, solicitation of organizational input from subordinates, and overall operational efficiency in the organization. The study will also explore how uniquely feminine qualities contribute to a distinctively transformational leadership approach in women, challenging the common notion that only men are qualified to lead because of their traditionally aggressive “masculine” demeanor. The findings will encourage advocacy for equal opportunities for both women and men to attain executive leadership positions in their organization. To these ends, the researcher conducted in-depth interviews with six women who are executive leaders within their respective organizations and asked them to narrate their experiences in their positions and the effects of their leadership styles, methods and approaches on the cultures of their organizations. This research also establishes the importance of subordinate buy-in and team collaboration to increase leadership efficiency within an organization.

### Dedication

I dedicate this dissertation to my father, for instilling in me the importance of an education, and for being my inspiration in pursuing it; and to my mother, my brother Cortney, my husband Jace and daughter Vayla, for their faith in and patience with me, and for pushing me to complete my dissertation when I felt like giving up on it. I love, appreciate and thank every one of you.

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## Chapter 1: Introduction

The dynamics of leadership positions within governmental organizations have changed tremendously. These changes are partially affiliated with political, economic, educational and status-related shifts within the present culture (Hayes, 1999), due in large part to the increasing number of women filling executive-level positions and the ways their leadership influences the culture within that organization. Although many public service positions are stereotypically seen as “masculine roles” and the concept of the strong leader is widely viewed as a male characteristic, women are adding a perspective to leadership that has been as successful as traditional male leadership.

Leadership is critical to any organization’s efficiency, adaption to change, and employee performance. Historically, public administration has been based upon the debate of leadership versus management, which has centered on civil servants working in hierarchical levels (Orazi, Turrini, & Valotti, 2013). The difference between public service managers and leaders is:

- Management focuses on overall organizational performance amid readily available resources and the use of already established managerial techniques.
- By contrast, leadership within the public sector is more proactive where line management comes into play and the most appropriate tools and resources are used to achieve performance within an organization (Orazi et al., 2013).

Public-sector management is often based on top-heavy management that relies heavily on middle management to achieve the organization’s overall mission and goals. Past research suggest that public-sector leadership is hard to establish, as its goals are extremely different from those of the private sector, so there is no clear, concise standard for leading either type of organization. Also, hampering public-sector leadership achievement is the clear split between

civil servants and elected, appointed and senior officials. Although the public tends to view this split from a perspective of cynicism of the federal government, clear parallels between state and city governments exist. This makes leadership not a priority, and this split can leave bodies within these governmental organizations constrained from identifying the roles and authority of leadership clearly defined in private sector organizations (Ingraham & Getha-Taylor, 2004).

Yet public-sector organizations should not jettison leadership simply because it is hard to obtain. Leadership is essential in the public sector, because it effects the organization's adaptation to change as well as more general organizational performance (Ingraham & Getha-Taylor, 2004). Furthermore, public-sector leadership behaviors are motivated primarily by the desire for achievement, as opposed to the lust for power many private-sector leaders possess. The actions of public administration leaders are often based upon instinct, in contrast with private sector organization leaders (Orazi et al., 2013). Past studies have also found no significant gender-based "differences found in high context cultures" (cultures that emphasize interpersonal relationships) in public-sector organizations, but gender-based differences in low-context cultures (cultures containing many connections, but for shorter durations and/or for specific reasons) are significant (Orazi et al., 2013, p. 492).

Contemporary research indicates that public-sector leaders are developed through traditional methods of transformational leadership, such as courses, coaching, and simulations (Orazi et al., 2013). However, studies also dictate that public-sector leadership has improved through self-empowerment, not traditional development. In contrast, transformational leadership works well in the public sector because it offers a relationship orientation that comprises inspirational motivation, idealized influence, intellectual stimulation, and employee participation, all of which appeal to civil servants (Orazi et al., 2013). In this way, transformational leadership

offers civil servants a different type of leadership that is ultimately relationship-oriented and opens the door to more visionary leadership approaches based on inspiration motivation and intellectual stimulation. These approaches encourage civil servants to actively participate in their organization, thereby giving them a sense of loyalty and pride in it (Orazi et. al., 2013).

Gender has always influenced the discussion of organizational dynamics. Culturally, men's gender roles have been not only deemed masculine, but also defined as 'breadwinners.' As breadwinners, men were historically expected to appear competitive, assertive and confident (Alkadry & Tower, 2014). In contrast, women were culturally viewed as 'supportive' and expected to take on a more nurturing role that displayed compassion and gentleness and deferred to males (Alkadry & Tower, 2014). These norms reflect heavily on organizational leadership characteristics. Women within governmental organizations may assume lower-level or intermediate-level positions that do not let them move forward due to the imbalances and norms those organizations have acquired over time. Masculine culture dictates that men must dominate society and act assertively, thus delineating a clear distinction between gender roles (Turetgen, Unsal, & Erdem, 2008). These assumptions have clearly delineated how positional hierarchies are organized and which gender-specific behaviors are expected within these institutions.

Successes of female leaders in male-dominated organizations are often challenged by established but 'unspoken' culture norms. Studies show that women in male-dominated leadership positions are evaluated less positively than their male counterparts are. These patterns are more present when women try to display more masculine styles, e.g., autocratic or directive. This mistreatment often occurs when a male evaluates a female's performance, and when women in male-dominated roles receive lower evaluations from male evaluators (Turetgen et al., 2008).

Another trend in male-dominated organizations is the emergence of informal leaders within them. Research reveals men to be informal leaders in short-term groups dedicated to a specific task. Conversely, women will take on leadership roles in more casual social groups (Turetgen et al., 2008). Women may have difficulty striving for leadership responsibilities in male-dominated organizations, because their cultures tend to demand male dominance in society, and assertively so (Turetgen et al., 2008). This type of cultural theme within an organization can be considered a form of segregation.

Segregation and underrepresentation within public administration fields is another challenge for women, who often find themselves in female-dominated positions that are paid less than comparable male positions are. Research posits the following reasons why many women do not enter male-dominated positions:

- 1. Education.** Women often seek education in more “caring” fields such as social work, nursing and teaching, as opposed to science and engineering (Alkadry & Tower, 2014).
- 2. Segregation.** Women may seek male-dominated positions but are overlooked by male executives within their organizations, which could be called a form of discrimination.
- 3. Position Segregation.** Women tend to find themselves in entry-level positions and/or lower positions than men hold, and advance more slowly in their positions than their male counterparts do (Alkadry & Tower, 2014). Most women are “concentrated in lower-echelon positions in organizations... The problem with representation of women is not simply their overall numbers, but rather how these numbers are distributed across the different hierarchical levels” (Alkadry & Tower, 2014, p. 109).

Female leadership has its disadvantages, however: “People have in their minds a set of expectations that concern auxiliary traits properly associated with specific positions” (Porat,

1991, p. 412). These expectations leave organizations leery of deviation from gender-role trends and/or characteristics society has put in place. Since established culture influences normative roles of men and women, social norms deem female qualities to be dissimilar to male ones and consider male-associated qualities to be leadership characteristics (Prime, Carter, Jonsen & Maznevski, 2008). A study by Biernat & Kobrynowicz (1997) examined the respective leadership roles of both men and women and the promotional recommendations each gender received based on its leadership. The study confirmed, as aforementioned, that women required more evidence of their leadership skills to be considered for promotion than their male counterparts required (Prime et al., 2008).

Furthermore, a study Wright (2014) conducted within the construction and transport industry found that, when the male breadwinning role is reduced by “unemployment, redundancy or greater female earnings,” it threatens what society would classify as a male’s “masculine identity.” When masculine identity is “challenged from within the heterosexual relationship by women’s greater earnings, some women express a need to take compensatory measures,” yet “some women were reluctant to take on the role as breadwinner or primary earner” for fear this would injure their male partners’ self-esteem (Wright, 2014, p. 995).

Female leaders, however, offer a different leadership approach, definable as “nurturing, sensitive, empathetic, intuitive, compromising, caring, cooperative, and accommodating” (Porat, 1991, p. 412). Examining where these characteristics come into play in school administration, Porat (1991) suggests that women tend to see leadership in a facilitative rather than executive role; facilitation lets employees make contributions within their respective organizations rather than lead them. For example, school principals, as facilitators, would value collaboration with the teachers, as well as others outside of the organization. The characteristics Porat (1991) lists

above potentially enable women to be more effective within these types of positions (Porat, 1991). These traits may seem feminine, being associated with a woman's traditional mother role in the family, but in organizational leadership they have been as effective as male-related traits. So the question is not whether women can effectively lead an organization, but how female leaders affect, and influence the culture of, traditionally male-dominated organizations.

Past research dictates that a combination of society, family, education, and religion affect the way women see their roles in society (Payne, Fuqua, & Canegami, 1997). Women often compare themselves to their male counterparts, assuming that men exhibit more qualifications for leadership than they do. Furthermore, women who become leaders in male-dominated organizations find themselves evaluated according to male characteristics (Payne et al., 1997). Women tend to be treated as submissive and not rational, based upon society's prejudices about them. This sets up a blockade for women attempting to gain respect within their organization as leaders, which gives male-dominated organizations unspoken permission to use these barriers to avoid hiring women executives/leaders based on gender-role stereotypes.

This study purports to clearly identify women who are working or have worked successfully in male-dominated organizations and to examine how these women have succeeded in this culture. The research will explore how these women have been promoted, the steps they took to achieve their positions, the mentors who have influenced their journeys, and the effects these women have had on their organizations' culture as a whole. Past literature has shown that female leaders are judged according to such masculine norms as "aggressiveness, forcefulness, rationalness, competitiveness, decisiveness, body size, strength, self-confidence, as well as independence" (Payne et al., 1997, p. 46). These standards of masculinity can make it difficult for a woman to establish respect and leadership within a heavily male-influenced organization.

Yet women have exhibited fewer public leadership experiences than men, but in turn have had more private experiences, tending to interact in more private places and groups, smaller groups of friends, and/or friendship pairs (Payne et al., 1997). Using schoolchildren as an example of how these private experiences meld into adulthood and into the organizations these children join as adults, Payne et al. (1997) confirmed from past studies that girls experience more intense and exclusive friendships that offer shifting alliances as well as indirect paths of disagreement, unlike boys. Furthermore, boys are praised for being more assertive and 'active' in both communication and learning, while girls are defined as, and praised for, being more passive in those areas (Payne et al., 1997). These experiences can benefit women within male-oriented cultures by enabling them to display another type of leadership not considered a "male leadership characteristic." Women's subordinates can often set high value on these traits (Payne et al., 1997). The authors also suggest that, although women may offer 'feminine' contributions to their organizations, e.g., "morale and harmony," these may be seen not as leadership qualities but as conditions in which "the tendency for women to emerge as leaders" grows stronger as "skills increase, and group members become more aware of each other's competencies, and/or social interactions become more complex" (Payne et al., 1997, p. 48).

Past research indicates that changes did occur in male-dominated organizations when women successfully assumed leadership positions in them; some "suffered harsh penalties for leadership competencies" (Prime et al., 2008, p. 175). By violating the social stereotypes through high competence in male-oriented leadership roles, women were viewed as more hostile and/or less likeable than their male counterparts (Prime et al., 2008, p. 175).

Another issue women face in aiming for leadership roles is the perception that they should be "more like men." This would entail working long hours, disregarding the work-life

balances they ideally want, and changing their already established notions of what leadership entails, which are focused primarily around dominant descriptions of leadership that are associated with men. Being “more like men” would also include more of the directive, assertive quality the archetypal “good leader” possesses. Yet, historically, society may not want women to display these traits, because that would cause them to appear less ‘feminine’ and too ‘manlike.’ Researchers who question why women do not “act like men” often regard women as “deficit” males (Offerman & Beil, 1992) This dictates that women are responsible for accommodating conflicting demands of their roles as women, as well as their leadership roles. This can be a disadvantage for women, because culture within organizations expects women to remain more communal, kind, and/or gentle, while expecting men to offer confidence, aggressiveness and self-direction. Since male characteristics are culturally defined as ‘leadership,’ the acceptance of men as ‘natural leaders’ is easier than the acceptance of women as such (Eagly, 2007).

As a continuation of the present literature, this study will explore the effects of female leaders on male-dominated government organizations, focusing on a diverse group of women in present or former roles in typically male-influenced organizations. The research will emphasize the significance of women as leaders in male-dominated public-sector organizations, presenting an in-depth understanding of how women affect the culture of their organizations and how this has and/or will affect the future of those organizations.

The researcher will interview six women who are current or formal leaders in male-dominated public-sector organizations, asking them questions about their experiences in these roles and the culture that surrounds their organizations. The interviews will determine whether that culture has changed extensively since women have taken leadership roles in it, as well as the differing perceptions of women and men when examining and defining ‘achievement.’ Each



gender may define that word differently, to the extent that a woman's perception of achievement may not cohere with traditional masculine views of it (Offerman & Beil, 1992). The aforementioned issues can be addressed through the interviewees' experiences within their organizations to confirm current female leaders' definitions of achievement.

Most research on women in leadership focuses on comparing masculine and feminine characteristics in organizations, to enhance theories that were based on masculine perspectives. Women not only are compared to their masculine counterparts, but they also must bow to societal norms that lean toward a more male point of view. Also, no substantial research has been conducted on women in leadership positions in male-dominated governmental organizations. To close this gap, this study will include women's personal perspectives of leadership within male-dominated organizations and how their presence and/or standing affect the overall organizational culture. The research will also examine the standing theories that address gender and leadership, adding the feminine perspective that may help to extend those theories for future research.

The research question this study will pose is: How, and in what ways, have female leaders in traditionally male-dominated organizations influenced the culture of their organizations? This question invites a more personal connection with actual female leaders (through interviews) that cannot be found through quantitative research methods, and enables the researcher to learn more about leadership by hearing about women's actual experiences in it. Qualitative research offers a more emic perspective by focusing on the insider's viewpoint, perceptions, beliefs, and meaning systems (Hennink, Hutter, & Bailey, 2011).

## Chapter 2: Current Literature

### Review of the Literature

In our society the social norm would automatically classify men as dominant leaders without considering women's potential to fulfill these roles. This would be considered the "alpha role." Traditionally, men fit the basic "alpha" description, and few hear of women being the alpha and/or pack leader in nature, as that would seem awkward and "out of place." Within an organization, women are seldom considered the "alpha," but are often classified as "bitchy," "dyke," "un-relatable," "unlikeable," etc. This is how the social norm casts her aside, assuming she is not fulfilling her classically defined "beta" role.

But what happens when classical tradition is not always seen in masculine terms? Can a woman be "alpha" in her own right, using socially considered "feminine" characteristics to become the "alpha" within her organization? Ward, Popson, & DiPaola (2010) examine the "alpha female," emphasizing that the "alpha" role has traditionally described males viewed as dominate leaders but has expanded to include women. The authors define the "alpha female" as "a highly motivated, talented and self-confident woman" (Ward et al., 2010, p. 309). Such a woman is deemed an extrovert who takes on a leadership position, seeing herself as a dominant force over both women and men but overall as an equal to her male counterparts, hence not only seen as a strong leader but also seeing herself as "personally strong" (Ward et al., 2010).

For the authors, prior research shows that, although women's roles have changed socially over decades, female leaders who are seen as "good leaders" are often described in "masculine terms," whereas managers and good leaders are often described academically using female characteristics. The authors saw alpha males as more risk-taking than alpha females; yet women leaders tend to be more communal, inclusive, and interested in "not only their own success but

the success of others as well. Alpha women also have the tendency to identify women who they feel will be successful or powerful leaders in the future” (Ward et al., 2010, p. 309).

This research contradicts other findings that suggest a woman must offer masculine characteristics to be a strong leader—not merely personality traits, but also ways of doing tasks. For example, a study by Wright (2014) established that men in heavily male-dominated sectors tended to work long hours in inflexible work patterns, compared to their female counterparts, and that women strayed from male-dominated work environments because those situations focused less on family-friendly practices. This led to further gender stereotyping, as well as hostile work environments and structural barriers between the genders (Wright, 2014). The Ward et al. (2010) theory that a woman must have an “attitude” that distinguishes her as an “alpha” contradicts present literature that suggests that, for women to gain respect as an “alpha” leader, they must take on a more masculine identity, possibly leaving behind the flexibility of work/family dynamics that can perpetuate further gender typecasting.

Once women have established leadership roles and are successful within them, other young women within their organizations must be guided to these roles so they, too, can succeed in the future. With the ever-present glass ceiling, potential leaders must be acknowledged and nurtured within organizations, these growing positions must especially have strong women who can be developed into executives and top leaders.

Research sheds some light on how successful and/or unsuccessful a woman can be in traditionally male-dominated organizations but does not necessarily examine why women stray away from these positions and organizations. Chen & Moons (2015) examine why women avoid male-dominated organizations: possibly due to a lack of power to influence. The authors explore careers such as science technology, engineering, and mathematics to rationalize the

underrepresentation within these fields and establish two main reasons for the lack of female representation in these fields, which they call a “leaky pipeline” in which: (1) more women than men have entered into these fields, and (2) these women will leave and/or be pushed out due to gender-biased policies and decisions, as well as underrepresentation. Furthermore, women generally do not enter and/or remain in these fields due to systematic reasons such as culturally based stereotypes that discourage women from entering into a more masculine domain, as well as interpersonal reasoning that suggests discrimination against women who apply for these positions. The aforementioned boundaries create low female representation, which elicits stereotype threats and inhibits learning and performance opportunities for women.

The authors suggest that, when considering male-dominated positions, women have less exposure to female role models who may have the ability to “buffer” the stereotypical threats that may be created within this environment, and often “women anticipate and experience a lack of belonging within fields perceived to be male-dominated...and because social acceptance is a fundamental human motivation, increasing women’s feelings of belonging, in male-dominated fields may be particularly important for attracting and retaining them” (Chen & Moons, 2015, p. 117). Thus women refrain from entering these positions because of their low interpersonal power, which can be a major factor in obtaining a position within any organization.

According to Chen & Moons (2015), past research suggests that a woman’s career and academic path is based less on agentic goals than on communal goals: the former lead to individualized achievement and recognition, whereas the latter are based upon interpersonal communication as well as relationships. Interpersonal power has a strong link to self-efficacy, which “entails an individual’s assessment of whether she has the requisite abilities and skills to succeed in a domain” and her interpersonal power describes her perception of whether she can

influence the people around her (Chen & Moon, 2015, p. 117). The authors' study confirmed that interpersonal power is important regardless of the level of female representation within a domain: "[P]eople often assume that similar others share their values, opinions and preferences and this assumption could lead women to infer that they will have less interpersonal power and influence in a context with low female representation"(Chen & Moons, p. 121).

Hoyt & Simon (2011) explore the effects of women on their organizations as role models in leadership. Confirming that women are underrepresented as executive leaders due to discrimination and negative typecasts, the authors believe that, historically, women have been categorized as "non-dominant" based on societal standards and, if aiming for elite positions, often face the barriers described as the "labyrinth," or the "unsanctioned barriers preventing women from securing top leadership roles" (Hoyt & Simon, 2011, p. 35). Suggesting that the "labyrinth" replaces the "glass ceiling" as a "journey of challenges" throughout a woman's professional process, the authors note women's potentiality to weed through those challenges to gain success. As opposed to the glass ceiling for capturing only "one single discernible barrier" (Hoyt & Simon, 2011, p. 35), the authors argue that women have an advantage over men when considering leadership styles, because women offer a more "transformational" leadership approach than men do.

Hoyt & Simon (2011) further argue that role models positively affect one's aspirations and perceptions and are key for underrepresented individuals. Having observed successful women's capability of overcoming gender barriers to attain success, the authors found women to be more inspired by female career role models than male ones and suggest that, by creating these "in-group" role models, women buffer damaging stereotypes that threaten their ability to attain executive and/or top leadership positions. Dissimilarly, these female role models can adversely

affect women's self-perceptions: "Women exposed to these outstanding female role models before engaging in a leadership task reported lower levels of perceived performance, greater task difficulty, and greater feelings of inferiority compared to women exposed to outstanding male role models" (Hoyt & Simon, 2011, p. 152).

The Hoyt & Simon (2011) study confirms several aspects of women growing into executive positions. First, without a strong female leader to learn from, women have difficulty growing into top-level positions. Though women may be more comfortable being mentored by their male counterparts, males may hinder women's ability to move beyond what they are trying to achieve: top management. This makes women vulnerable to limitation by male standards as well as the glass ceiling. The authors also stray away from the dynamics established in past literature that suggest a stigma and/or a social norm dictating that women ultimately have weaker leadership and/or mentorship capabilities than men do.

Martinez, Beaulieu, Gibbons, Pronovost & Wang (2015) examine the effects of organizational culture on performance, as well as those of management on organizational culture. The authors propose that organizational culture not only drives economic activity, but also partially results from it, as moving aspects of culture—e.g., patterns and/or behaviors within those organizations—can affect economic activity (Martinez et al., 2015). For the authors, external cultures can affect an organization's internal dynamics, mostly in private-sector organizations such as international marketing and/or service departments. The authors question whether organizational cultures can be developed as well as managed internally, even with outside influences (Martinez et al., 2015).

Past research dictates that organizations will hire women in more mid-management positions as opposed to top-level or executive-level management ones. Many researchers have

blamed the glass ceiling and barriers for a woman's difficulty advancing into these positions.

Dreher (2003) discusses the glass ceiling and the ratios between women in mid-management and top-management positions. Although the number of mid-management women has increased, their chances for reaching top-management ones are rare where they hit the glass ceiling, which reduces their chances of higher success later. The author deems the glass ceiling problematic for women wanting to grow from lower-level positions:

1. Women who doubt their ability to obtain high-management positions due to their gender will not compete for those positions.
2. Women who sense a lack of diversity within top-management and/or executive-level positions are less likely to enter into or aim for them.

To justify these claims, the author cites that, by 2000, only 12.5 percent of women represented management; of those, only 5 percent had entered into top-management (Dreher, 2003).

To understand why the glass ceiling exists, Dreher (2003) uses both Blau & Kanter's (1977) social contact theory and the strategic human resource management theory. The former suggests that an "increase of proportionate size of a minority group should promote more contact with members of the majority and reduce the stress and performance pressures experienced by minority group members" (Dreher, 2003, p. 543), establishing that minority groups are at a disadvantage due to their social stigmas and characteristic behaviors. The author also suggests that, as groups become more distributed, more of an inter-gender balance occurs, which will create the opportunity for minority groups to influence the management practices more, which in turn can influence their opportunities for success. The strategic human resource management theory, however, suggests that more qualified female candidates will pursue executive positions if companies more actively provide career opportunities for women. This strategy also assumes

that “HR practices should be interrelated and internally consistent [and] these interrelated practices can exert more influence on organizational objectives” (Dreher, 2003).

Bolman & Deal (2008) continue exploration of the glass ceiling theories that associate stereotypes with leadership roles. They link high-level executive positions to leadership characteristics often characterized as male traits, which make it challenging for women to be organization leaders—powerful, yet feminine at the same time—because strong-sounding women tend to intimidate both men and fellow women by testing the “conventional understanding” of gender roles while in leadership positions (Bolman & Deal, 2008). Such an understanding often permeates organizations and is considered traditional in them. Research also proposes that this type of notoriety can be useful, because it brings a “female advantage,” as well as an empowerment that focuses on styles that may be limited for men: (1) a concern for people, (2) nurturance, and (3) the willingness to share information (Bolman & Deal, 2008).

Also, empowered women often have a greater discretion, as well as greater flexibility, to actively represent groups to which they are associated or drawn (Bailey, 2004). Research shows that agencies focusing more on masculine policies and areas often had more men in leadership positions, whereas women in leadership positions may have a higher risk of failure and lower visibility in masculine-dominated organizations and/or roles (Monaghan & Smith, 2013).

Matsa & Miller (2011) analyze the glass ceiling in corporate organizations. Confirming that 47% of all American women are employees in the workforce but only 6% of these are corporate executives, the authors suggest that women may stray from the potential for promotion to avoid the imbalance of home and work that is often associated with executive positions, and that “demand-based and/or institutional barriers” might also detain women from pursuing these lucrative positions (Matsa & Miller, 2011, p. 635). The authors also confirm that women in



executive positions on boards face institutional leadership barriers that suggest gender preferences in the operation of organizations—”one and/or both sexes will discriminate in favor of members of their own sex”—and that increased female board participation may create a culture that is more “appealing for women” and will ultimately lead to the “share of women in top management” positions (Matsa & Miller, 2011, p. 639). Promoting women into these executive positions strengthens the prospect that they will become role models and/or mentors for other women at lower positions within their organizations.

Male and female leadership styles have always been compared. How their styles differ depends heavily on their success within their organizations. These styles also set the tone for their organizations’ cultures. Morgan (2006) proposes that leadership styles and culture often show how organizations work as they do. Past research suggests that women in traditionally male leadership roles are judged by their ages and physical characteristics, as opposed to their accomplishments in their positions. Most of these traditions are often shaped and dominated by what conventional culture sees as male value system patterns, including logical linear models of thought and action, as well as the drive for results at the expense of network and community building. By contrast, female value systems are deemed more balanced in rational and analytical thought, which can evoke more empathic, intuitive values. In light of that, this research will examine the trends of women within these dominant roles and how the aforementioned concepts may affect their organization’s culture (Morgan, 2006).

Women face many barriers to moving up in an organization. One is desire for a family-work balance within the career. Some women require flexibility for family-work dynamics, which leads to occupational segregation. Women may not want to take leadership positions or work in male-dominated organizations for fear they may lose this flexibility. Hoobler, Wayne, &

Lemmon (2009) analyze women's family-work conflict and how the glass ceiling affects their level or frequency of promotion within their organizations. The authors examine the degree to which a supervisor's or management's perceptions of women in family-work conflict may affect women's advancement potential. Advancement barriers include gender stereotyping, lack of mentoring, inability to look past masculine traits to determine leader effectiveness, and tendency to view women in a nonworking, caregiving role, based on assumptions that women are more nurturing than men and that the demands of women's work-life conflicts are "incompatible with work and family roles" (Hoobler et al., 2009, p. 941). The authors also found that managers saw women as a poor fit for higher-level positions due to their work-life conflict: "perceptions of fit were directly related to promotions and promotability" (Hoobler et al., 2009, p. 949).

Oswald (2008) examines contributions to college age women's decisions to pursue feminine occupations as opposed to masculine ones, stating that women make up almost half of the workforce but these occupations remain gender-segregated (Oswald, 2008). Certain degrees are also segregated within this workforce segregation: 29% of these women received bachelor's degrees in mathematics and computer science, 21% in engineering, and 42% in physical science (Oswald, 2008). The author explored the reasoning behind these academic and career choices according to cognitive career theory, which states that occupational choices are influenced by career interest, by expectations for positive outcomes, and by self-efficacy, which, according to the author, personal interests influence: "[I]f women do not expect to succeed and place relatively little value or personal interest on math and science, then they will not choose to take advanced classes or go into these traditionally masculine fields" (Oswald, 2008, p. 196). Interests are in turn influenced by cultural stereotypes, beliefs and behaviors; previous achievements and/or related experiences; as well as financial support, social aspects, ethnicity, and network

contacts. In the context of the cognitive career theory, these influences can either support or create barriers to women's career choices (Oswald, 2008).

The other also considers occupational choice models in which "women make career choices within a general cultural context of pervasive gender stereotyping that may influence their liking for and perceived abilities occupations for which gender typing exists" (Oswald, 2008, p. 197). Oswald (2008) found that women had an interest in feminine occupations as opposed to masculine ones, and that weakly gender-identified women reported low ability for feminine jobs compared to women who were offered stronger gender identification. The author also found that strongly gender-identified women were chronically aware of their areas of stereotypic skills and acted accordingly, but weakly gender-identified women did not necessarily think of their skills when considering gender stereotypes: "[A]ctivating feminine stereotypes contributes to women's endorsing interest and perceived ability to be successful in feminine-typed occupations...both interest and perceived ability are important factors that predict academic and career choices" (Oswald, 2008, p. 201).

Jewell & Whicker (1993) examine female underrepresentation in the political arena, particularly the state legislature. Women are more widely represented in state government than in national government, but women in state government still constitute less than approximately 50% of the American population (Jewell & Whicker, 1993). Suggesting that lack of female participation in politics was due to women's "weakened condition in the market place as well as their non-market role" (Jewell & Whicker, 1993, p. 705-706), the authors argue that political participation benefits women, for these reasons:

1. More women are entering the workforce than at any time in American history, and are more interested in the positions with upward mobility and higher pay that their male counterparts hold.
2. The family structure is more diversified. The authors suggest that the “nuclear family” has changed tremendously since the 1950s, when the structured family was based on the man working and the woman staying at home with the children. Since then, unconventional families—single-parent households, divorces, remarriages, blended families, gay and lesbian families—have become more prevalent (Jewell & Whicker, 1993). As family structure has changed, so have socially accepted female roles. Thus more women are likely to divorce, to become single parents, to never marry, or to enter the political arena. As structures fluidly change over time, women become more acceptable as candidates in national politics (Jewell & Whicker, 1993).
3. The aging baby-boom population and the increased popularity of second careers are also opening the door for greater female participation in politics (Jewell & Whicker, 1993).

Retamero & Lopez-Zafra (2009) analyze gender roles in leadership by exploring causal attribution. Acknowledging a double standard regarding women and men in leadership positions, the authors suggest that attributes such as sensitivity and affection tend to be feminine traits, while men are seen as more dominant and aggressive. Female leaders must not only manage their feminine traits (caretaking, kindness) but also assume male-related ones (self-assertion, dominance, aggression, etc.). Yet the latter may subject women to prejudice when seeking higher leadership positions, because “these traits are seen as more congruent with masculine roles and people more easily credit men with leadership ability and more readily accept them as leaders”

(Retamero & Lopez-Zafra, 2009). For the authors, past research reflects that men's successes were attributed to their ability, whereas women's successes were attributed to mainly luck.

Hatch (1993) deems the organizational culture theory relevant, but proposes concepts drawn from symbolic-interpretive ideas, which center on symbols and/or symbolic behaviors within organizations and the interpretations of those behaviors. The author believes that incorporating symbolic-interpretive concepts into organizational culture theory “formulates the theory in processual terms” (Hatch, 1993, p. 658). The author examined four processes—Manifestation, Realization, Symbolization, and Interpretation—suggesting that they create a cultural dynamics theory with two components: (1) realization, adapted from the enactment theory; and (2) interpretation, derived from symbolic-interpretation studies. For the author, organizational culture “exists simultaneously on three levels: artifacts, values and assumptions” (Hatch, 1993, p. 659):

1. Artifacts are grounded by values and assumptions but are considered the “tangible and/or audible” results of activity.
2. Values are considered to be goals, standards and social principles.
3. Assumptions are “taken for granted beliefs about reality as well as human nature” (Hatch, 1993, p. 659).

For Hatch (1993), past research shows that assumptions are essential in understanding and changing a culture: if a leader, founder and/or manager teaches her or his beliefs and values to the organization (with validation of successes), its culture will “undergo cognitive transformation into assumptions” (Hatch, 1993, p. 659). The author also suggests that culture is established through processes encompassing change and stability.

Allcorn (1995) explores organizational culture as well as workplace subjectivity, suggesting that the quality of an organizational culture can enhance and/or inhibit individual, group or organizational work (Allcorn, 1995). The author also states, “[O]rganizations that nurture feelings of self-esteem, participation, empowerment and effectiveness create a sense of security and confidence for their members” (Allcorn, 1995, p. 74), hence employees respond intentionally and assume personal responsibility as well as perceive changes as opportunities. Some organizations, however, can take on an opposite approach, in which employees are alienated and their skills are made intentionally obsolete. This can make employees feel helpless, suspicious, misled, and often anxious when faced with both internal and external issues that may require changes (Allcorn, 1995). When changes arise, these kinds of tensions can make employees feel threatened and more likely to defend “against their anxieties by using reality-distorting unconscious psychological defenses” (Allcorn, 1995, p. 74).

Hayes (1999) examines women’s presence in leadership roles, suggesting that women have always had interest in and capacity for them but political, economic and societal restrictions hindered their attainment of those roles. Now that these restrictions have been reduced, women are more able to step into those positions, as well as bring new styles of leadership to their organizations. Suggesting that the presence of women within these positions can also help redirect some societal opinions regarding leadership, the author proposes that leadership theories were not developed with women in mind, but whatever is discussed about leadership now applies to both sexes, and if leadership is based around group dynamics, then women “become both an action model and a challenge to theory” (Hayes, 1999, p. 113). The author further argues that women tend to work well in groups, are able to influence them, and are transformational within their organization by bringing attention to new features in it, such as “child care programs, the

Family Medical Leave Act (FMLA), or other programs that support family values” (Hayes, 1999, p. 114). The author confirms several societal changes that have influenced women’s ability to step into leadership roles:

1. Political changes: women are participating more in the political process (Hayes, 1999).
2. Economic rights: women have the right to “buy, invest, and hold property” but could not be taken seriously when they were unable to “write a check, charge and account, and/or negotiate a deal” (Hayes, 1999, p. 115).
3. Education: women have worked toward education, as well as other resources, to move into professional positions (Hayes, 1999).
4. Influence: women have more resources and capabilities for establishing relationships where they can “influence the course of events” (Hayes, 1999, p. 115).

Though societal changes have hastened the shift of society’s view of women in leadership positions, this leadership is not about “power” or coercion, but it engages the values of people “so that they want to work toward a goal” (Hayes, 1999, p. 115) that organization members must consider worthwhile. Furthermore, leaders must acknowledge the attributes and/or interests of their members and use those qualities as building blocks toward such a goal (Hayes, 1999).

Klenke (2002) analyzed contemporary women leaders who implement leadership in diverse environments. The author bases this analysis upon central themes from Cinderella fairy-tales, to provide a “compass for what is right and wrong,” and because a fairy-tale “serves as a barometer for change” (p. 19). Storytelling is a powerful tool for giving the reader insight into the living part of an organization, because “stories emphasize the non-linear, irrational aspects of organizational life, the part often not considered by scientists or organizational scholars” (p. 19).

Klenke (2002) also suggests that leadership is determined and “shaped by parameters and dynamics context” (p. 24). The author deemed the leaders she interviewed to have:

1. transformational/transforming leadership ability, as well as emotional intelligence;
2. inspirational, optimistic, future-oriented visions; and
3. close connections with their followers, exemplifying a leadership that emphasizes

followers’ contributive values and creates collective interests as opposed to self-interests.

Emotional intelligence, a mental activity that helps people to recognize their feelings as well as those of others, lays the groundwork for many decisions of effective leaders and reveals the ability for leaders to “motivate themselves, persist in the face of frustration, and make lasting commitments to the common good” (Klenke, 2002). Such leaders, for the author, tend to be driven to perform, as well as motivated by the desire to achieve.

Dolan (2000) confirms Naff’s (1994, 2001) findings through research of Senior Executives (SES) in the federal government, but directs her research toward how policies are made and how attitudes as well as behaviors affect not only clients and employees but also the policies that are implemented in a federal organization. Dolan (2000) suggests that bureaucrats who share the public’s attitudes and values tend to produce policies that reflect public concerns. Passive and active representation also influences representative bureaucracy-shaping policies: the former is considered a presence within an organization, whereas the latter is seen as an individual pressing the interest to “the people as a whole or a segment of people” (Dolan, 2000).

Dolan (2000) continues to explain that, when presented with choices, people will base them around their personal beliefs and attitudes. Although an employee’s first intuition is the influence of race and gender, an organization will work to foster its culture. Also, public administrators are expected to press their views and interests onto their own societies, e.g.,



women administrators in state organizations showing more interest in workplace issues such as daycare, flexible work schedules, and equal pay (Dolan, 2000).

Dolan (2000) tests the theory of gender and the support of women's issues within the workplace. The author found that female SES members were more likely to support women's issues, and that women and men equally held greater support for women's issues when the organization had more elite women. Interestingly enough, both women and men in elite positions (SES) would be less attentive to women's issues when the organization had policies advocating for the benefit of women within an organization, e.g., women's business ownership through the Small Business Administration (Dolan, 2000).

Monaghan & Smith (2013) focused their research around gender representation, whether bureaucrats truly resemble the public, and how key this representation was to the delivery of services within federal organizations. Addressing the extent of representation of men and women in regulatory agencies, as well as the influences of these organizations upon these women obtaining these positions, the authors found much association between gender, leadership and policy: agencies working within the feminine policy arena more likely had female leadership, while agencies in masculine policy areas had more men (Monaghan & Smith, 2013). This suggests that women are twice as likely to hold leadership positions in which feminine policies are involved. In contrast, interaction, visibility, and complexity in second-level female positions tend to go from positive to negative. The authors suggest that women hold positions with a higher risk of failure and lower visibility in high-visibility agencies (Monaghan & Smith, 2013).

Ellemers (2014) explores the gender differences in organizations, stating that organizations with gender diversity, especially in higher management levels, tend to profit more, and that female presence in leadership positions helps companies to penetrate new markets by

catering to different types of customers and/or suppliers (Ellemers, 2014). Also, having a more mixed-gender management teams opens a path for more effective problem-solving, creativity, and innovation, which leads to the ability to understand complex demands as well as cultural differences in global markets.

The author points to issues surrounding gender, including gender pay differences, stating that “gender pay differences may result from a greater reluctance of women, compared to men, to negotiate about their pay or to request a raise or promotion” (Ellemers, 2014, p. 47). Women in general tend to avoid competitive pay schemes compared to their male counterparts (Ellemers, 2014). This trend, for the author, may explain patterns of biological and evolutionary differences where women were seen as more caring and men were considered more competitive, but confirms no significant and/or convincing evidence to support these characteristics. The author also confirms that most gender differences occur in social, as opposed to biological, contexts: work organizations tend to favor male or female employees (Ellemers, 2014). These invisible barriers, though unintentional, may have originated in an organization’s culture and daily practices; even if an organization values individual performance, it can still use these unintentional barriers (Ellemers, 2014).

The author also examines “paradox of equality,” which suggests that men are more likely to receive awards (promotions, bonuses) than their female counterparts, even with equivalent performance evaluations, thus unintentionally triggers gender stereotypes and biases when exploring merit (Ellemers, 2014). The rationale for gender differences appears to be based on the area of behavioral science that reasons that individuals and organizations mutually influence each other, and, if only one female is working with a group of men, this can lead women to assume that “their contributions are likely to be considered unimportant”; which in turn

undermines their motivation and performance (Ellemer, 2014, p. 48). In contrast, if women recognize the aforementioned behavior as self-defeating and reassure themselves that their contributions within their organizations are valued, this will enhance their motivation, hence performance (Ellemer, 2014).

Ellemer (2014) also examines the “queen bee” phenomenon regarding women who perceive themselves differently from other women by seeing themselves in highly masculine terms, thus indicating extreme ambition. Through these thoughts and characteristics, successful women tend to distance themselves from gender stereotypes, which can lead to their underestimation of competence and ambition of their junior female colleagues, hence their possible resistance to measures of securing equal opportunities and/or reluctance to train their junior female colleagues (Ellemer, 2014). These tendencies may not be an effort to shut other women out of advancement opportunities, but rather a way to cope with gender biases within their organizations (Ellemer, 2014).

Rick Caceres-Rodriguez (2011) discusses organizational theories while intertwining them with representative bureaucracy by using gender in public organizations as the stage for understanding how they are connected. The author begins by examining the socio-psychological theory of social norms as well as independent decisions. This theory suggests that genders have specific traits associated with the lack of mobility for women in organizations: men’s leadership and management traits are due to physical characteristics such as “aggressiveness, dominance, self-confidence, and forcefulness,” while women’s traits are more “affectionate, helpful, sympathetic, sensitive and soft-spoken” (Caceres-Rodriguez, 2011). This theory also sets up societal norms that put women in a “proper place,” which sets up a division in gender roles that makes it harder for women to break free of these stereotypical roles (Caceres-Rodriguez, 2011).

Intra-organizational practices suggest that gender separation in agencies persists due to the “bottom line,” and only when agencies start to fail in effectiveness do citizens question these practices (Caceres-Rodriguez, 2011). In contrast, leadership theory stresses the foundation of “top-down organization” and suggests that social representations make women and younger management likely to desegregate. Also, when an organization has a strong female presence, women are likely to lead it (Caceres-Rodriguez, 2011). The author’s figures also emphasize the under-representation of women in executive-level positions: women fill 60% of General Schedule entry-level positions for administrative duties. In higher-paying General Schedule positions starting at GS-11, men outnumber women (Caceres-Rodriguez, 2011). This theory has strongly affected constituents, policy, and bureaucrats’ interactions with their customers.

Watts (2009) explores women in management in male-dominated professions, specifically construction, suggesting that, although affirmative action and equal opportunity are firmly embedded within the organization, women are still strongly underrepresented in top management positions, and will survive in these types of roles only if they follow the examples of their male counterparts to subordinate home and family to company and career, which the author calls “remasculinization” (Watts, 2009). Past research highlights the barriers women in male-dominated positions face: harassment, inflexible work structures, reliance on long working hours, men’s resistance to being managed at all, etc. (Watts, 2009) Furthermore, “structural and social factors combine to create a fragmented and unstable ‘dog-eat-dog’ environment where external controls, whether by employment law, unionization, health and safety regulation or by managerial authority, are difficult to implement” (Watts, 2009, p. 513).

The author suggests that the status of minorities, or the representations of 50 percent or less of a total population, must have high visibility, which is twofold: positive when operations

are running smoothly and goals are being reached, or negative if the opposite is true, which can cause poor performance as well as costly errors (Watts, 2009). Also, when a newcomer joins a group that differs from the demographics of their colleagues, the majority will face challenges, and may make the newcomer feel unwelcomed or ostracize that person as an 'outsider.' When women enter the male-dominated workforce, this can create an uncomfortable environment containing crude sexual jokes and language and potential sexual abuse (Watts, 2009).

Wessel, Haigwara, Ryan & Kermond (2015) examine verbal identity management strategies with women entering male-dominated organizations. The authors break feminine and masculine traits into two terms, "agency and communion" (Wessel et al., 2015), seeing agentic traits as achievement-oriented, independent, and assertive, and communal traits as more relationship-oriented, warm, and supportive. Past research confirms that men are seen as more agentic and women as more communal, and these respective traits are often used when men and women are evaluated in the workplace: agentic traits are often identified with top leadership positions within organizations and used to describe the qualities of a successful manager, whereas women in male-dominated organizations are often seen as incongruent because of their perceived communal traits, thus women applying for leadership roles in traditionally male-dominated roles are often met with biases (Wessel et al., 2015). Past research found lower performance expectations for women applying for leadership roles than their male counterparts, particularly when the position was more male-associated, but women combat these disparities by emphasizing the fit between their personal characteristics and those of the job for which they apply, as well as using more agentic traits to describe themselves when applying for a leadership position in a traditionally masculine organization, because women with more masculine

characteristics and/or interests were evaluated more favorably for traditionally male roles than those who offered more communal characteristics and/or interests (Wessel et al., 2015).

The authors do recognize that some communal characteristics are seen as worthwhile in a more modern workplace, as such female-oriented behaviors as mentoring and communicating are becoming more desirable within an organization (Wessel et al., 2015). Past research confirms that women were rated more favorably over men in leadership competence because “they are seen as competent enough to have gotten the traditionally masculine position and seen as having a gender based advantage in communal leadership competence” (Wessel et al., 2015, p. 244).

Bradbury (2011) reviews literature of representation and diversity within the federal government, including case studies and reports from government entities. These reports and studies examine representative bureaucracy in different facets. The author begins by exploring women in the government workforce and the increase in female management positions there. As of 2007, 45% of managers were women and were less likely to hold post-high-school degrees, and women tended to be younger than men in these positions (Bradbury, 2011).

The author also examined representative workforces in race and ethnicity, confirming that representation in these areas has increased. Yet Hispanics are still underrepresented in government positions, and a large representation discrepancy in street and management levels of bureaucracy remains (Bradbury, 2011). This discrepancy is based on the following:

1. White and Asian/Pacific Islanders tend to have received higher education (bachelor’s degree or higher); and
2. Often it is who you know, not what you know, which in turn leads to what the author refers to as the “good ol’ boy” network (Bradbury, 2011) that gets you in the door.

The author also scrutinized diversity within the U.S. Department of Defense (DOD), suggesting that, although the DOD has its legal unified definition of ‘diversity,’ assimilation tends to cause a loss of these characteristics. Assimilation would require minorities to adapt to the influences and attitudes of the group’s majority, which results in “disguising” true attributes that would have been used to characterize or distinguish this minority group’s identity (Bradbury, 2011). These reviews establish the importance and value of representation in government and highlight the issues that remain in agencies that are moving forward with broader ethnic, racial and gender representation within government organizations.

Yammarino & Dubinsky (1994) examine transformational leadership theory by testing boundary conditions, defining ‘transformational leadership’ as a unique connection between a leader and her or his followers that accounts for exemplary performance and/or accomplishments for an organization. Within this theory, leaders do more than offer basic transactions and/or rewarding behavior: they take an interest in their organizations and move their followers “gradually from concerns for existence to concerns for achievement and growth” (Yammarino & Dubinsky, 1994, p. 790). These leaders are also reputed as role models who help their followers to develop the ability to take on their own leadership responsibilities, “yet perform beyond established standards and goals” (Yammarino & Dubinsky, 1994, p. 790). To this end, transformational leadership has four dimensions: (1) charisma, (2) inspiration, (3) optimism, and (4) enthusiasm (Yammarino & Dubinsky, 1994).

Offerman & Beil (1992) focus on women’s achievement behaviors and leadership outcomes, confirming that many issues women face as leaders are brought forth by social and institutional barriers based on the stereotypical belief that women cannot lead as successfully as their male counterparts. For example, past research labeled women as “deficit” males, and

“researchers questioned why women do not act more like men” (Offerman & Beil, 1992, p. 38). Furthermore, women’s achievement is rarely studied based on intrinsic values such as long-term cooperation and/or teamwork, which are key success-drivers. Past research also looks at leadership and achievement in masculine terms and fails to acknowledge individualized concepts that do not “mesh” with the masculine point of view (Offerman & Beil, 1992).

Zhang, Li, Ullrich, & Dick (2012) examine transformational leadership when considering top management teams, suggesting that establishment of such teams created increased team effectiveness as well as increased performance within an organization. Suggesting that top executives are important to an organization because they are determinants of the success to an organization, Zhang et al. (2012) break transformational leadership down into two parts:

1. “One part is group-focused and comprises leadership behaviors that transform follower values and inspire them to pursue a collective vision of the future, which motivates all members belonging to the group or organization to perform beyond their expectations.”
2. “The second part is individual-focused and comprises leader behaviors that are unique to a particular leader-follower dyad” (Zhang et al., 2012, p. 1899).

The authors consider group focused transformational leadership to be an average style of leadership by which effective leaders motivate their groups of followers. Four different behaviors of transformational leadership should be recognized when looking at transformational leadership and performance:

1. Identifying and articulating a vision;
2. Providing and appropriate model;
3. Fostering the acceptance of the group goals; and
4. Leaders with high but realistic performance expectations. (Zhang et al., 2012)



Past studies of transformational leadership “assume that these behaviors benefit all followers and implicitly assume that these effects are comparable across everyone,” but what is unrealized is that, when looking at top management teams, executives offer different perspectives, which can lead to disagreement, contention and conflict within an organization, thus impede performance (Zhang et al., 2012, p. 1903).

The other form of transformational leadership is an individualized approach, which the authors call “differentiated transformational leadership and performance” (Zhang et al., 2012), a dual level model with two dimensions of leadership: (1) individualized consideration and (2) intellectual stimulation. In this instance, leader behavior differs from follower behavior, and the leader will tend to recognize each employee’s individual needs and capabilities, as opposed to those of the entire team as a whole, for individual consideration “provides customized socioemotional support...while developing and empowering them” (Zhang et al., 2012). In contrast, intellectual stimulation refers to the leader behaviors that appeal to the employee; this “makes them question their assumptions and invite innovative and creative solutions to problems” (Zhang et al., 2012, p. 1904).

The differentiated transformational leadership approach does not target the “team” as a whole but does affect the team’s outcomes, and lends more support to some employees than to others (Zhang et al., 2012). The authors found that the top executives displayed two facets of leadership: individualized and group. Though the leaders engaged in behaviors, they also paid special attention to followers’ individualized needs and capabilities. However, using differentiated leadership caused significant challenges on the functioning of the team, thus has the tendency to harm organizational performance; this harm can be extended through the hierarchy of leadership (Zhang et al., 2012).

In looking at transformational leadership and goal clarity within organizations and how they influence attitudes and behaviors, Caillier (2016) deems effective leadership to be key to producing administrative reform in the public sector, and transformational leadership is the one leadership style that creates more positive outcomes in both attitudes and behaviors, conduces to more self-efficacy, and lessens turnover within the public sector (Caillier, 2016). The author also discusses goal clarity, or employees “knowing the consequences of their actions on self, the work unit, and the organization” (Caillier, 2016, p. 886). Goal clarification can reduce role ambiguity, and transformational leaders are key to this process. They can:

1. set clear goals and visions within the organization;
2. encourage employees to challenge obstacles such as unclear goals and to remove barriers to clarifying and accomplishing their goals; and
3. mentor employees and provide them with professional development.

All of these actions can enhance the effectiveness of the information workers communicate to their leaders and one another (Caillier, 2016).

The author also explored transformational leaders and self-efficacy, which he defined as “an employee’s perception regarding their capabilities to perform well” (Caillier, 2016, p. 887). For Caillier (2016), employees with high self-efficacy work on analyzing and finding solutions to their problems, can set high goals, and are more committed to achieving them during difficult times, whereas those with low self-efficacy focus on self-doubts as well as failure.

Transformational leaders lead by setting good examples for high self-efficacy, and they tend to foster the same attributes in their followers (Caillier, 2016). Furthermore, employees have a clearer understanding of their goals when their leaders practice transformational leadership, because transformational leaders can articulate clear goals while teaching their employees how to

perform their roles while nurturing their professional development (Caillier, 2016). Work outcomes are more successful when goals are clearer, and “transformational leaders enhance employee capabilities to perform well through goal clarity” (Caillier, 2016, p. 897). Moreover, transformational leaders “did not impact self-efficacy directly but rather indirectly, by first enhancing goal clarity” (Caillier, 2016, p. 898). The author suggests that employees with high-efficacy felt more competent and felt more comfortable engaging in extra-role behaviors such as making suggestions for improving the organization, compared to those with low self-efficacy.

Pradan & Pradan (2016) examine transformational leadership’s effect on followers in relation to organizational commitment and contextual performance. The authors confirm from prior research that transformational leaders engage their followers meaningfully, which ensures the achievement of organizational goals as well as personal growth: a developed transformational leadership style lets both leader and follower “transcend to a higher level of motivation and morality,” which not only motivates the follower, but also furthers the collective pursuit of the goal(s) beyond self-interest (Pradan & Pradan, 2016). This is how transformational leadership offers positive outcomes in not only job satisfaction, but also job commitment, individual and collective performance, perceived justice, and work-unit effectiveness, while having a positive effect on followers’ job-related attitudes, behaviors, and performance (Pradan & Pradan, 2016).

In addition, transformational leadership links the follower’s self-identity to the organization’s identity, which “inspires the individual follower to stay loyal towards the leader as well as the organization” (Pradan & Pradan, 2016, p. 174). Furthermore, inspirational motivation creates a company vision that attracts the commitment of followers who are loyal toward that vision; such a commitment is unconditional, absolute, and intact (Pradan & Pradan, 2016).

The study further confirms from prior research that “supervisors demonstrating transformational styles persuade their subordinates to engage in pro-social behaviors” and that transformational leaders inspire their followers to look past their “self-centered goals” and “prioritize organizational goals over individual gains by engaging in activities which although are not part of their formal job roles but are very much gains by engaging in activities which are not part of their formal job roles but are very much desirable” (Pradan & Pradan, 2016, p. 181).

Hage & Finsterbusch (1989) argue that organizational development is derived from “the human relations approach to organizations,” focusing on worker performance improvement, mostly through interpersonal relations and group processes. Organizations tend to stifle individual initiatives and motivations, but this can be improved by enhancing job designs, career opportunities, worker autonomy and decision-making participation, goal clarity, and cooperative processes.

All of these solutions can motivate workers by increasing their skills and job significance, creating worker autonomy, and giving constructive feedback. Thus organizational development sets out to change employee attitudes, organization culture and climate, group processes, job designs, etc., in interpersonal relations (Hage & Finsterbusch, 1989).

For Hage & Finsterbusch (1989), organizational development has four dimensions: (1) intervention, (2) organizational development tactics, (3) data collection, and (4) resources.

Intervention is usually intended to change individuals or groups. However, when addressed at the organizational level it seeks to change the entire organization’s culture and/or climate by improving and/or changing its members’ values and beliefs.

Organizational development tactics are seen as group discussions, decision-making T-groups, and problem-solving groups. Discussion and/or decision-making builds motivation,

development consensus and goal clarity, whereas T-groups emphasize better communication as well as building trust, focusing more on solving problems than boosting morale and/or group relations. Organizational development at a micro level does require much change, as few major structural changes occur in the development process.

Data collection leans toward surveys that mainly address interpersonal relations: individual attitudes, job satisfaction, motivation, etc. (Hage & Finsterbusch, 1989).

Hertneky (2012) explored female career paths and leader development by interviewing female college presidents in many phases of their presidencies within their colleges. The author suggests that career paths and leader development have been firmly based upon “male models with women’s deviations from the male standard interpreted as deficiencies” (Hertneky, 2012, p. 140), so, to be effective in a formal leadership position, a woman must perceive herself as a “leader.” The interviewees discussed “the process of creating, shaping, and inventing their careers and themselves as leaders” (Hertneky, 2012, p. 145), and most mentioned the importance of working with teams and/or colleagues. Lacking plans and/or designs for being leaders, these women were more interested in development and growth than in gaining power within their positions. So they were learning along the way to their career path and “made career choices, while shaping their understanding of themselves as leaders” (Hertneky, 2012, p. 149).

Lines (2005) examines structural and functional attitudes toward organizational changes, which the author defines as deliberate alterations made to an organization’s formal structures, systems, processes and/or product-market domain in order to approve organizational objections. Arguing that successful organizational change depends on how individuals react to it, Lines (2005) divides historically organizational change into the following categories:

1. Exemplars of organizational change, such as downsizing or mergers;

2. Process aspects, such as communication or participation;
3. Research focusing on specific factors mediating the relationship between change and reactions; and
4. Research concerned with specific reactions to change.

These categories help us to understand how organization members react to change, since many past attempts to examine organizational change have been biased toward negative behavior associated with a change in an organization (Lines, 2005). When members of an organization are first informed of a change, they form a set of beliefs about it, and attitudes toward the change arise out of concerns about how it will affect a member's job, or if the change's objectives can be carried out to meet and/or align with that member's values. Change can also create emotional responses in members, but both beliefs and emotions formulate an "attitude" that influences "emotion evoked toward change, behavior toward the change as well as subsequent processing of change-relevant information in predictable ways" (Lines, 2005, p. 11).

For Lines (2005), attitude toward change is critical to the change process, because those attitudes are difficult to alter. Attitudes persevere because of their "tendency to produce selective exposure to information, a biased memory of encoded information, as well as active argumentation against attitude" (Lines, 2005, p. 11). Furthermore, "when people are exposed to information that is inconsistent with held attitudes, people tend to produce counterarguments" (Lines, 2005, p. 11) that can bolster the original attitude. Thus organizational members are unlikely to process change-related experiences open-mindedly and/or flexibly, in part because people tend to make up their minds early in the change process. It is therefore more effective to engage organizational members before the proposed change, so the organization can influence reactions before the change transpires (Lines, 2005).

### **Analysis of the Literature**

The aforementioned literature offers several foundations that interlink gender, culture and organization. Payne et al. (1997) suggest that women must possess male traits to succeed within their organization, because they are socially and culturally seen as submissive, which can affect their ability to move forward within their organization and/or gain the respect necessary to establish the foundation for future leadership positions. In contrast, Ward et al. (2010) offer a more contemporary outlook to women moving forward in executive positions. The authors brand women who have excelled in leadership positions as “alpha.” Traditionally considered a male term, the authors suggest that “alpha” can also be viewed as a woman’s characteristic, wherever she is not traumatized by social and cultural thinking and believes she is dominant within her position over males and females alike.

Offerman & Beil (1992), however, confirm that women are not viewed as competitors for male-dominated leadership positions, but are merely the “deficit” within an organization. Asking why women cannot act like men in the executive arena, the authors confirm that studies accomplished using masculine terms fail to address the feminine concepts within leadership that have proven to be equally successful. Bolaman & Deal (2008) also ascertain that male traits characterize leadership positions. A woman’s assumption of these traits can often intimidate both men and fellow women, but can also give women an advantage within executive-level positions, because it challenges traditional gender roles within an organization. This dictates Morgan’s (2006) study that asserts that women in male-dominated roles are judged based upon their age and physical attributes rather than on what they could bring to the organization.

Another challenge women face in leadership positions is gender preferences. Matsa & Miller (2011) confirm that, within an organization’s operation, sexes will discriminate against

the opposite sex in favor of the same sex. Which could explain why most of the aforementioned literature reports an extremely low percentage of women in executive-level positions.

The literature also confirms that women have been linked with more socially and culturally traditional roles, such as middle-management and non-echelon positions from which advancement to executive-level positions is not possible. Also, Hoobler et al. (2009) delineate what they believe are the true barriers women face to moving forward within their organization:

1. Women would like to strive for career goals, yet they require a balance between work and family dynamics. So they stray away from executive-level positions because male-dominated organizations and/or leadership positions may not allow them the flexibility they need to maintain this balance.
2. Women tend to be held back within their organizations because of the ever-present stereotype that a woman may be incapable of coming into an organization as a leader.
3. Because men have a more dominant presence within their organizations, they gain entry into executive-level positions more easily than women do.
4. Women offer a more nurturing, inclusive approach to their leadership than men do, but this, coupled with women's desire for work-family flexibility, is not compatible with the social norms of male-dominated organizations and/or leadership roles.

Retamero & Lopez-Zafra (2009) offer findings similar to those of Hoobler et al. (2009) but believe women must manage these feminine characteristics and/or emotions so they can seek higher positions. Both of the above pieces of literature suggest that women must meld to male characteristics to obtain leadership positions. Hayes (1999), however, believes that women can be effective leaders without undergoing such a transformation, thus can change societal norms



regarding leadership. Klenke (2002) also believes that leadership is determined by parameters and dynamics beyond what is considered merely male and/or female characteristics.

The literature does not address women's behavior in a male-dominated organization. It does consider how men act and/or treat women within these organizations, but few articles detail women's actual experiences in executive and/or male-dominated positions. The literature also fails to consider how women who enter male-dominated organizations as executives affect the cultures of the organizations, though it does touch on why women tend not to enter male-dominated organizations as leaders, and whether they could establish leadership effectively if they did enter that way.

Although the literature clearly addresses the discrepancies for women who wish to enter top-level management positions, it does not consider how the aforementioned leadership styles and characteristics of women who are already within top-level management positions have affected their behavior and the operation of their organizations. The literature does not clearly address and/or define what actually occurs culturally in settings in which women are executives. Most of it is based on theories of female leadership but fails to discuss personal experiences of women that may justify and/or denounce current theories. The literature dictates that women must have specific male characteristics to advance into leadership positions or be considered as leaders but overlooks the effects a woman has on an organization's culture when she uses traditionally feminine characteristics to lead. The literature suggests that women are not necessarily interested in power, but in the opportunity to develop and grow, which contradicts their male counterparts' goals for those executive positions.

Historically, the literature has discussed the challenges of women entering into executive-level positions and/or male-dominated organizations and the characteristics a woman must

possess to be successful in these positions, but fails to explore the characteristics women possess *before* entering these positions or the evolution of their characters after doing so.

By adding to the literature, this study will convey a better sense of the woman's practical experience within male-dominated organizations, debunking any theory that inaccurately shows how an organization actually operates when its social norms are interrupted. Also, the study will offer a 360-degree aspect of what occurs within male-dominated organizations and what attributions can be added to these organizations when women are present in their leadership.

### **Chapter 3: Methodology**

#### **Qualitative Research Methods**

Qualitative research methods are most appropriate for this study, as they allow detailed examination of people's actual experiences. These methods also enable the researcher to identify issues directly from the participants' perspectives (Hennink et al., 2011). The interview subjects will be encouraged to discuss in detail their personal experiences within their organizations and to distinguish how patterns in their organizational culture changed once they had assumed their leadership roles. Thus they may present their work culture in a different light from what quantitative research methods could offer.

The qualitative method will also expound on already established theories and add insight to them. Past literature addressed women in executive-level and/or male-dominated positions from a male point of view and from the outside in. However, this method will give a well-rounded perspective through a personal outlook of women already established in their roles as leaders in male-dominated organizations. The research will address the issues these women have faced, as well as the lessons they learned in these positions. This study will offer women's perspectives from a diversity of governmental organizations and their management levels.

In contrast, quantitative methods reach conclusions through measurements and counts, and speak to a broader population (Hennink et al., 2011). The question of how female leaders in male-dominated organizations influence the culture of those organizations cannot be answered using quantifiable measures, but through a firsthand understanding of behaviors, beliefs and actions (Hennink et al., 2011) gained from hearing the oral experiences of actual women in these leadership roles. Quantitative methods also separate the researcher from the research, which will not work here; in qualitative methods, the researcher embraces the research (Randle, 2010).

In qualitative data, however, descriptions cannot be reduced to numbers. Encoding processes must thus be used so data can continually be verified. Qualitative methods also present the difficulty of finding trends within the collected data. Trends must be established by more than two subjects, which may be difficult to achieve, and these trends cannot be statistically analyzed, as they are not based on numerical data (Hennink et al., 2011).

Yet qualitative methods allow the use of small-scale studies that promote explanations and give firsthand accounts of experiences, as well as understandings of the dynamics of those experiences (Brown, 2010). Small-scale studies are also flexible, which decreases the distance and power differential between researcher and participant (Brown, 2010). The research will explore the experiences of a small sample of women. They cannot speak for the entire population of women in male-dominated positions, but can offer a clear understanding of how their organizational cultures have affected their leadership and/or vice versa. While quantitative research identifies statistical trends, patterns, averages, frequencies or correlations, qualitative methods enable the researcher to identify social processes in organizations and understand the sociological contexts of participants' experiences (Hennink et al., 2011).

### **Phenomenology and Documentary Analysis**

This study's methodological approach combines phenomenology and documentary analysis. Phenomenology is used to investigate "lived experiences" to gain an in-depth understanding of the women's positions in their male-dominated organizational cultures, and to invite the readers into a dialogue about these women. This phenomenology thus focuses on "the meanings as it relates to identity, perceptions of individuals about themselves, others, acts, society, and culture" (Randles, 2012, p. 18). Documentary analysis will develop comparisons and descriptions within the research to correlate and explain behaviors within the cultures of the

organization, thus inviting further exploration of the glass ceiling within organizations and organizational culture, as well as the ability to not only describe a specific behavior but “also the context within which that behavior occurs” (Hennink et al., 2011, p. 257). This context gives meaning to that behavior and assists the researcher in understanding the behavior’s “symbolic” importance to the organization (Hennink et al., 2011). Documentary analysis also enables the researcher to notice relationships and connections that can assist in developing explanations, and to deeply study the cultures within the organization as well as the women within them.

### **Interviews**

In-depth interviews are the most appropriate technique for this study, as they enable the interviewees to share their experiences and the interviewer to gain insight into the interviewees’ organizational culture (Hennink et al., 2011). In-depth interviewing forges “mean-making partnerships” between the interviewers and their respondents through “knowledge-producing conversation” (Hennink et al., 2011). The researcher can thus establish a trusting relationship with her subjects that would motivate them to share their stories without judgment and/or criticism. Interviewing has its challenges as well:

1. The researcher must observe and document behaviors, opinions, patterns and needs without fully understanding which of those data will be meaningful to the study. This could become an issue when the researcher attempts to interpret the data once interviews are complete. Also, while conducting the interview, the researcher may overlook some behaviors, opinions, patterns and needs that are significant to the study.
2. The success of the interviews depends upon the skills of the researcher, which makes personal biases possible.

3. Qualitative research naturally has some subjectivity, which can lead to procedural problems. This can occur through the “researcher’s position becoming privileged and blocking the participant’s voice” (Hennink et al., 2011, p. 44).

The researcher will conduct interviews of a sample of six women now or formerly serving in the public sector. Women selected for interviews will be considered strong leaders in some form in their respective organizations, as well as major influencers of the culture of their organizations, and will represent a diverse population with a well-balanced mix of experiences. Women from state, local, county and/or federal government at a variety of service levels in diverse responsibilities and positions will be selected. This will ensure a broad spectrum of participants who will be able to give different perspectives on their respective organizations. Each will have at least two years’ experience within her organization.

The researcher will assume that the interviewed women will be open and honest about their experiences and views about their organizations, will have had unique experiences within them, and will have influenced their organizational cultures through their leadership. These women will be well known in their current positions and will have active relationships with a wide variety of employees within their organizations, to give the researcher a clearer picture of how these women work within them. Interviews will be conducted in person or by phone. Participation will be voluntary; any interviewee may withdraw at any time without ramifications.

Conducting a case study through interviews, in addition to consulting existing documents and literature, will enable the researcher to focus on women’s actual experiences as leaders and examine the uniqueness of each woman’s organizational culture. Interview questions will focus on the organizational cultures of women in masculine-valued systems, their contributions as leaders in these organizations, and the successes and failures of their influences on their cultures.

**Participant Selection**

Participant selection will be a key facet of this study. Interviewees will be chosen through purposeful sampling, as opposed to random sampling, which means this study cannot be applied to the larger population. Purposeful sampling is both deliberate and flexible and enables the researcher to obtain interviewees with specific characteristics and/or experiences that are most appropriate for this study. To this end, a diverse sample of women from a variety of public-sector organizations will be selected. A very small sample will be interviewed, which could be another risk, because at any time any participant may decide not to continue the interview. How much information they choose to share is another risk. These risks will be reduced by keeping on hand an additional listing of women as diverse in their experiences as those selected for this research.

The target population will be women now or formerly serving in executive-level public-sector positions considered male-oriented, including chiefs, superintendents, directors and/or political roles. The researcher will focus on Minnesota women in the Twin Cities metro area.

The researcher intends to receive informed consent from each participant by holding an open discussion of the research and its outcomes with the participants and addressing any questions or comments they may have before the interviews begin. They will be informed that their anonymity will be ensured through proper data storage, data analysis, and any publication processes involved.

The goal of these interviews is to form a connection and explore individual experiences without jeopardizing the participants' welfare. To maximize the benefits of the research and minimize risks to the participants, each will be treated with professionalism, respect and courtesy (Hennink et al., 2011). The researcher will introduce herself, discuss in detail the purpose of the study, and address participants' questions. The researcher must provide sufficient information to

the participants about the study as well as the process and/or procedures for the interviews, which will be recorded and then transcribed into written documents. The researcher will inform the interviewees on why the interviews will be digitally recorded and who will be listening to them. Conscious of the social and/or economical harm that could arise from data collection (Hennink et al., 2011), the researcher will ensure that the participants are well aware of the interview objectives, how the data will be used after the interview, and all outcomes of the study.

In a non-exploitative manner, the researcher would like to establish a trusting relationship with all participants so they can be comfortably open and honest about their experiences within their organizations. The researcher will ensure that all data is anonymous and all information is secure and confidential. Furthermore, some of the topics discussed can be considered sensitive, especially those relating to how the participants' subordinates and other leaders may regard them within the organization.

### **Barriers**

Also, barriers may arise when using the aforementioned methodology:

- 1. The presence of the researcher.** This presence is unavoidable and can influence the responses of the subject. The researcher will attempt to avoid this by using reflexivity throughout the process and remaining fully aware of her own values, self-identity and/or ideologies (Hennink et al., 2011). Reflexivity can create methodological openness for researchers to reflect on how the data were made to include the actions that may have influenced the data collection (Hennink et al., 2011).
- 2. Confidentiality and anonymity.** This could create problems during the presentation of findings. The researcher recognizes the impossibility of complete confidentiality due to findings and quotes shared within the paper. The researcher can ensure anonymity by



removing all personal information on interviewees from interview transcripts so subjects cannot be identified through the data collection process. The information gained from the interviews will also be collected, analyzed, reported anonymously (Hennink et al., 2011), and shared with only the research team. When the recordings and transcriptions are not in use, the researcher will place them in a secure location.

- 3. Presenting multiple perspectives.** Multiple perspectives can make it difficult to reach a consensus and provide a clear bottom line. The researcher's goal should be to develop a coherent argument that will take the audience through the key issues of the core findings (Hennink et al., 2011). The researcher intends to develop from the collected data a case study that will present contrasting experiences in order to emphasize the multiple perspectives of the participants. The case study will also enable the researcher to highlight the core common issues the participants present (Hennink et al., 2011), to use multiple perspectives, and to address the reasons why consensus did not occur, based upon the government agencies the participants work or worked in, the role they have or had within their organizations, the differences among their overall experiences, etc.
- 4. Lack of generalizability.** The intention is not to create generalizations, but to create or add onto frameworks that can shape what we see in public-sector organizations and how we will understand this observation for future studies, and to build onto additional perspectives and the way of looking at reality (Hennink et al., 2011). The researcher is determined to understand the lived experiences of the women who will be interviewed and to learn their perspectives (Hennink et al., 2011) so that conclusions may be drawn from patterns of information provided by each woman interviewed.

### **Narrative Analysis**

To present the participants' experiences, as well as the meanings behind them, in the way most relevant to this study, the researcher analyzed the data using narrative analysis, which benefited the study as follows:

1. Narrative analysis acknowledges people's use of their stories to interpret their lives, experiences, changes, sense of self, and relationships with surroundings (Frost, 2009).
2. Narrative analysis represents the data in textual form. This form addresses the research problem in lived experiences, not numbers, and helps the researcher to explore and conceptualize the "human experience" as represented in the study.
3. Narrative analysis presents the stories as knowledge that describes human experiences in which actions and/or happenings within these stories contribute positively and/or negatively in attaining goals and fulfilling purposes (Polkinghorne, 1995).
4. Narrative analysis enables the exploration of individual and organizational dynamics, which is important to establish in this research.

Narrative analysis also "considers the content, form and context of narratives while keeping the text as whole and un-fragmented as possible," which allows the researcher to examine the "big picture" of the participants' experiences (Frost, 2009, p. 10). Reissman (1993) uses five levels of representation within the narrative analysis process:

1. Attending to the participants' experiences, in which they recollect specific features of those experiences and engage in reflection, remembering, and recollecting, thus give meaning to certain phenomena.
2. Allowing the participant to re-present the events of their experiences to the listener in the conversation, namely the interviewer. In this step, the interviewer and the participant are

creating the narrative together: by relating her experiences according to the interviewer's questions, the participant is creating her "self" (Reissman, 1993).

3. Transcribing the experience: The interviewer transforms the participant's spoken words into a linear language and summarizes what the participant says (Reissman, 1993).
4. Analyzing the experience: The interviewer analyzes the transcripts of the participant's presentation while defining critical moments within the participant's narrative.
5. Reading the experience: Readers encounter the final written product, and "critical readers include their understandings of the 'makings' of a work in their interpretations of it" (Reissman, 1993, p. 14).

### **Approaches to Narrative Analysis**

There are many approaches to using narrative analysis. Reissman (2003) offers four: (1) Thematic Analysis, (2) Structural Analysis, (3) Interactional Analysis, and (4) Performative Analysis. This particular research calls for Thematic Analysis, which explores the content of the narrative texts and examines "what" is said, rather than "how" it is said (Reissman, 2003). This enabled the researcher to collect stories, inductively create conceptual groupings of data, and find common themes across research participants and their shared experiences, often by analyzing their transcriptions by theme (Reissman, 2003).

The researcher analyzed each interview according to Schleiermacher's concept of the "hermeneutic circle," in which the whole illuminates the parts and the parts offer a complete picture of the whole, thus leading to a deeper understanding of the parts (Josselson, 2011). The hermeneutic circle gains us an overall sense of meaning while analyzing the parts in relation to the whole. Josselson (2011) offers four methods of approaching each transcript in this way:

1. Do an overall reading of the interview to determine the general theme(s) that structure the narrative, and then return to each part of the interview to develop its meaning and to consider the more global meanings in light of each part's deepened meaning.
2. Do multiple readings to identify different voices of the self, and create a view of how these selves are in dialogue with one another.
3. Iterative readings continue until a "good gestalt" that encompasses contradictions is developed. Different themes create sensible patterns and merge into a coherent unity.
4. Enter into conversation with the larger theoretical literature, to remain sensitive to nuances of meanings expressed and diverse contexts into which the meanings may enter.

### **Evaluation of Validity of Information**

The researcher considered the validity of the information obtained. Reissman (1993) asks how we, as researchers, evaluate narrative analysis, stressing that a personal narrative "is not meant to be read as an exact record of what happened, nor is it a mirror of a world 'out there' " (Reissman, 1993, p. 64). In finding validity in narratives, the researcher had to keep in mind that individuals tend to exclude experiences that undermine the current personal identities they wish to claim. The researcher must also recognize that some people do lie, thus may need to apply the aforementioned narrative methods to expose the lying and uncover what actually occurred, in part by considering what was both said and not said within the transcriptions. Reissman (1993) suggested four approaches to validating narrative work: Persuasiveness, Correspondence, Coherence, and Pragmatic use.

**Persuasiveness.** Persuasiveness considers whether the participant's interpretation of her experience is reasonable or convincing. Persuasiveness "is greatest when theoretical claims are

supported with evidence from informants' accounts and when alternative interpretations of the data are considered" (Reissman, 1993, p. 65).

**Correspondence.** Correspondence is considered when results are shared with the participants. This enables the researcher to find out what they thought of her work, while possibly revealing theoretical insight into the results (Reissman, 1993).

**Coherence.** There are three types of coherence: global, local, and thematic. Global coherence represents the overall goals a narrator is trying to accomplish by speaking; in essence, global coherence is developing an account to justify an action. Local coherence is the narrator's use of "linguistic devices to relate to events to one another" (i.e. contrasts) (Reissman, 1993, p. 67). Thematic coherence relates to chunks of interview texts following particular themes that recur, or that the researcher considers central to the study (Reissman, 1993).

**Pragmatic.** This approach lets future researchers determine the trustworthiness of this study by: (1) describing how interpretations were produced, (2) making inconspicuous information or data clearly visible to readers, (3) specifying how we accomplished successive transformation, and (4) making primary data available to other researchers (Reissman, 1993).

The research sample comprised six women serving and/or formerly serving in executive roles in public administration. The researcher interviewed each participant and then transcribed all interviews. The transcriptions were never un-fragmented and were always treated as a whole during the entire analysis process. Josselson (2011) defines the analysis process as piecing data together, making invisible data apparent, deciding which data are significant and insignificant to the study, and "linking seemingly unrelated facets of experience together" (Josselson, 2011, p. 227). This is what the researcher strived to accomplish during the analysis process for this study.

Although each participant's story differed in nature from the others, the researcher found common themes among them. For example, many themes fell within Transformational Leadership Theory: once the participants had firmly established their leadership roles, they created more relationship-oriented organizations that inspired co-worker motivation and idealized leader influence on co-workers, their intellectual stimulation, and their participation in the company's goals (Orazi et al., 2013). Each participant found that her subtle ways of installing a more transformational approach to leadership created collaboration, organizational change, and positive cultural influences upon the staff.

By identifying common themes within the transcriptions and describing those themes, the researcher wanted to understand each of them in relation to one another as a dynamic whole (Josselson, 2011). During the entire analysis, the researcher ensured that its main focus was the content of the interviews, rather than how and why the participants shared their particular stories. The researcher also analyzed each transcription individually, and then went back through all of them to find common themes. The researcher categorized events within the transcriptions in accordance with the research question for all six interviews.

## Chapter 4: Narratives

This chapter briefly overviews participant narratives as well as key themes the researcher found in each. The interviews are then analyzed in accordance with the research question posed.

### Research Participants

The research participants were six women of different ages and backgrounds who serve and/or formerly served in executive-level roles in male-dominated public administration organizations. The participants were selected because they were all women who are serving or have served in executive leadership roles in traditionally male-dominated organizations. The participants offered a differentiated style of leadership compared to their male counterparts and offered different perspectives of how they attained their leadership roles and how they have succeeded in them. By giving their perspective of their culture, how it has changed since they started, and how the organization's dynamic has changed since they started, the participants gave the researcher valuable insight into how the female leaders were influential in affecting the culture within the organization they are/were serving.

All participants graduated from college and/or pursued college-level coursework. Two participants held multiple executive positions within the government; one was appointed by President Obama. Two currently hold federal positions, one has a state position, and the others serve and/or are formerly served in local government/city roles. All women have at least one year of experience in their respective executive-level roles.

**Narrative 1: Debbie.** Debbie never intended to become a patrol officer. Initially she was a city planner for St. Paul, and later held many administrative roles from administrative assistant for two mayors to budget analyst before her recruitment for the police department

“I was the first female on patrol on the St. Paul Police Department,” she said. “As I tell people, I was the first female on patrol on the St. Paul Police department who happened to be African-American, because people try to segregate me, and, ‘Well, you were the first African-American police officer.’ No, I was the first woman.”

Though this had not been Debbie’s lifelong dream at the time, the mayor of St. Paul asked her if she would be willing to take part in the police academy. “I got into law enforcement... I really didn’t... I only did it because the mayor asked me to go do it for two weeks, sit in the academy, because one of the ten guys in the court-ordered class dropped out the Friday before the academy was supposed to start, and they couldn’t start without ten African-Americans, and I was the only one that the mayor had control of, because I was a city employee, so he could put me on leave and ship me over there.”

Debbie recalled many situations that had built her foundation to her career as a commander, but she recalls a few instances that defined her within her position. The first was her recruitment by the EEO officer to continue her physical exam: “[In] the police exam back in 1974, which is when the test started, you had a civil service exam, and you had a physical agility, which was the West Point Military Physical Agility Test. You had to run 25 yards, get over a 6-foot wall, run 25 yards, get over a 4-foot fence, 25 yards, climb a ladder and jump down into a cylinder. They had a hole cut for the size of a 6-foot man, because, before our class came on, they had a height requirement. You had to be 6 feet tall. I was 5-foot-6¾. So I had to jump up, get out of that, and run this obstacle-course twice. There were 2,000 that took the test; 450 were women. I was the only woman that passed, and only eight men did better than I did.”

After completing the academy, passing all tests, and being offered the job on the force, Debbie was not interested in taking the job as a patrol woman, but “what happened in-between



that time, there was an election. There was a new mayor. My position that I had was there, but it wasn't funded, so I either go back and work for nothing—because the new mayor was a Republican, and he wasn't going to give me no money—or stay at the police department. So that was how I ended up at the police department. It wasn't by choice. It was because I needed a job.”

Debbie's period with the police department was not always pleasant, but she made the most of a difficult situation. After taking midnight shifts for eleven years, she volunteered for a daytime activity, which included being what calls “officer friendly.” For six-week periods she would be sent to speak with elementary-school children at different schools on bicycle and bus safety. Her male counterparts did not want to do this, so she was responsible for these assignments. Then she was assigned to gang-resistance training education programs in which she would talk to middle-school children about gang issues.

“I knew these kids in my area from kindergarten all the way up to middle school, because they have seen me throughout their lives, and, as I talk to people, I always tell them, ‘Who is out on the street all day long after school is out and in the summertime but kids?’ I would get out, I would see the kids, and I would stop and talk to them. If something happened, I would pull over and ask the kids... ‘You know, so and so... There was a car stolen... Did you happen to see the car go back?’ They would say, ‘We know Billy stole that car,’ or ‘Billy broke that window,’ or whatever it is. So then my fellow officers would get a little pissed about, ‘Why are they talking to you?’ “

Debbie continued her communication continued with these children, not only because she had a passion for working with children, but also because she could turn that opportunity into an asset when she received information she needed from children, established relationships with their families, and became an inspiration for the children when they established careers as adults.

Debbie recalled a disturbing instance that further established her growth within her position: “Now they put me out on Rice Street, which was at that time one of the hot districts, busy districts in the city. They had the Hell’s Angels headquarters on Albemarle and Front, so you had Born’s Bar there on Rice Street, which was a bikers’ bar, so you had to deal with the bikers. While I was a rookie—I mean, while I was on midnights—everybody on Rice Street at the time were two males in a car. They put me in a one-person care on Rice Street on midnights...they wanted me to quit, so that was...you know.”

Debbie advanced from patrol officer to field training officer (FTO). “Going back when I came on when I was a police officer I became an FTO, a field training officer. We were at coffee one night, and there was, like, three or four of us, and I had my rookie with me. Anyway, he in front of my peers felt comfortable enough to make derogatory comments about me: ‘Don’t know why I have to be trained by *her*.’ Excuse me? Yeah, outwardly. This is a rookie. I wrote him up, because you have to write up this stuff when you are a field training officer, so that the next person knows the attitude and the behavior issues. I had some young officers that came on, and they thought it was a disservice to them to be assigned to a woman and a minority, I guess.”

Debbie moved on to become sergeant of the night shift, as well as supervisory of the same male colleagues she had worked with for many years as a patrol officer. She was sergeant for five years and lieutenant over the juvenile unit for three years, and then was promoted to commander over the juvenile unit. “I took the sergeant’s exam, and I actually took the sergeant’s exam three different times. I passed it, but they didn’t promote me until the third time. They were resistant to having a female be a supervisor. I took it three times and passed, and then they promoted me on the third time to sergeant. The worst thing was, when they promoted me to sergeant, usually you get promoted for career advancement and development. I had been on

midnights for eleven years, and they promoted me to sergeant and put me as a supervisor over the people that I had worked with for previous years.”

Debbie recalls how she changed the culture of the police department on her watch as sergeant: “As a supervisor, I tried to make sure, and I said at every roll call, I said, ‘We are here to support each other.’ Even some of the guys had issues with the other guys. I said, ‘This isn’t about whether you like them tonight or tomorrow. It is about tonight. We are here together, and we are here to back up each other.’ I was pretty supportive on making sure that people knew, and I would call people in if they weren’t doing why they were supposed to be doing.”

When Debbie became commander of the juvenile unit, she was not assigned the diversity of duties that male officers in her position had, but this did not affect her role as commander. “I had to tell this to my officers, because a lot of time when they had to work with juveniles, they used to say that the ‘cops’—they are ‘shoot-’em-up, bang-bang guys,’ I call them—they didn’t want to be ‘babysitters’ for juveniles, and so, when we were in the juvenile unit as investigators, I say there is only one department in the whole St. Paul or any department that has the authority that a juvenile officer has. We are the only department that, if a juvenile gets brought into the juvenile unit, the investigator, after doing the investigation, has the authority to refer the parent, to refer to a social service agency, or to refer to court... You can actually change behavior after you interview and get a sense of, if the kid is trying to get his life together, or if there are things going on in his family where you cannot refer him to social services... It is a powerful, powerful unit, but cops don’t look at that... They think they don’t want to be kiddy cops.”

Debbie was asked if she had wanted to be chief of police, as she was the chief’s equivalent when he was not in the office. “I am a great second, because I am very analytical, and I am very strategic. I don’t want to be in front of the media. That is not me. People tell me I am a

great speaker, but I don't want to be out there. Let me be behind the scenes and do the digging and try to strategize on how we can solve a problem, and I am great at that. So I am a great second. So I had no problem being second or being in charge of the juvenile unit.”

As commander, Debbie continued to work with the juveniles, the schools and their superintendents and families, and the chief of police to build the students a mentoring and/or nurturing culture and to decrease the racial disparities within the schools. Now retired, Debbie continues to train women and mentor them in law enforcement across the country as well as internationally. She has earned many awards, particularly the Heritage Award in 2013.

The themes found in Debbie's narrative were:

1. Adversity
2. Cultural resistance
3. Self vs. capabilities
4. Organizational change
5. Resilience
6. History

**Narrative 2: Colleen.** Colleen is State Director for the USDA Rural Development. Amy Klobucher recommended her for the position. Colleen's position is unique in that it is not based solely on agriculture: “I oversee a staff of about eighty-five, and we do economic development in rural Minnesota. We do community programs, so that is libraries, hospitals daycare centers, emergency services...a multitude of things that communities need in order to thrive and grow. We also do housing for single-family housing and multifamily housing, and we do business loans for small businesses, entrepreneurs and large businesses. We do broadband, and we do renewable energy—a broad spectrum of things, and we are kind of that square peg. When people

think ‘USDA,’ they certainly don’t think of those types of programs. They think of corn and beans, meat inspectors, that kind of stuff...”

When asked if a gender gap existed in her organization, she said one did, but she hoped to change that. “I think this is pretty normal, or it has been across the board for USDA in general, that most of the supervisors were men and the techs were primarily women... Part of it is they hire people for supervisory positions with degrees in agriculture, which we do [for] economic development, but I wouldn’t go there.” When she began as director, only one woman was on senior staff, working on multifamily housing. Colleen acknowledged the gender disparity and wanted to rectify this by creating a more diverse culture. “My administrative officer is male, and I had four program directors at that point, and all but one was a male, so one woman. My public information officer was a male. We had fourteen people in senior staff, and one was a woman. When I came, that made two women, and then I got to hire a deputy, and I hired a woman.” Her goal to build a more diverse work force was hampered by the national office, which determines the process for hiring, which “is crazy ridiculous, and it is really hard to get diversity when you are experiencing some of these things that many, many populations that are diverse don’t have.”

Colleen’s work culture comprises open communication, innovation, and collaboration, values her boss partially supported. “My boss always was willing to listen to what I thought about something frequently. He didn’t do what I wanted, but at least we had the conversation, and I feel that is an important piece in any organization. I also think it is really important for people who are actually doing the work, listening to them about how it could be done better. I am a firm believer in that... I think we have brought a culture of ‘It’s important to talk about how we can change things.’ “ This new culture has created an open-door policy within her organization. “I have been very clear from the beginning with my senior staff that I expect people to push back

hard. If everybody agrees with me, obviously something is wrong, because, contrary to popular belief, I am not the smartest person in the room. I am being sarcastic there... I think it is important to be blunt... You don't have to be mean, and you don't have to be nasty, but I think you have to be blunt, and I think you have to be truthful."

Colleen's staff concurs with her approach. She recalls one of her staff members saying, "You know, Colleen, I think we are working well here. I think this is a good relationship where we feel that what we say makes a difference."

Colleen also attributes her success to great male mentors. "There have been so many men over the years who have been great, great mentors. You need both. As a county commissioner, I needed male mentors, because there weren't very many women... Being the President of the National Association of Counties was a real wonderful thing. I actually worked on rural issues... Most of our association presidents were men, so there haven't been very many women."

Colleen had never believed she would attain any of her positions. "I think a part of that is, you never think you know enough or are good enough to do something, and when you get an opportunity, you work really hard to hopefully not fail." Addressing her weaknesses, she said, "I don't have a college degree, which you know I should have gone back and did it, had it and got it done, and I didn't. "Colleen believes this weakness "is a huge limiting factor for me, both in my brain and... Without a degree, people don't look at you like they do with one so that is limiting."

Regarding her strengths, "To a certain extent I have been willing to take risks and try things that I haven't thought about trying before. I have also felt that relationships are really important to me and really critical in my personal life and in my public life. When you build your relationships, you build them before you need them."

When asked where she saw herself growing in her career, Colleen emphasized, “The last thing you want to do is follow my road map. I have never, ever been very plan-full about where I was going or how I was getting there.” She will continue to make an impact within her director position by taking a different but successful approach toward leading her organization.

The themes found in Colleen’s narrative were:

1. Diversity
2. Cultural influence
3. Mentorship
4. Organizational change
5. Self vs. capabilities

**Narrative 3: Anne.** As Chief Deputy of the Department of Commerce, Anne oversees the budget, human resources and public policy, and manages the entire department. Though her department is gender-diverse in middle management, only three women serve on the leadership team. “Prior to the Dayton administration...their feelings about women at commerce were much more negative at that time. I think there were a couple of things that potentially compounded the issue. One was during the Pawlenty administration: the goals were to cut government anyway, and so each year their path was to eliminate 5% here and 5% there, and so you saw a decrease, generally speaking, in the number of staff. Second, it was the sense that women weren’t supported, and that it was much more ‘boys club,’ if you would, at the department. Even when I started, I will tell you that I felt that way. When there were still holdovers that have now left, and the commissioner has hired his leadership team, I was the only woman in the room, and the men [were] all older, white men, and it wasn’t the same vibe when started that it is today.

“I’m wanting to support women and do things to make a choice, whether it is help being flexible with new moms coming back to work and make sure that we have a lactation room available, and being mindful that people have to take breaks. Just supporting that and trying to not let... I don’t even want to say it is a barrier, but what had been perceived as barriers in the past don’t have to exist any longer. I just think that I have been mindful as I have gotten older, and I have seen some of the way that women are treated.”

Though Anne’s agency is small, the one problem they had to overcome with her assistance was the siloing of each department from the rest of the organization. She moved toward a more collaborative, innovative approach. One of her goals “was to create a more collaborative culture at the department and to break down all of those silos, and so one of the things that I wanted to do once I started was, we do monthly manager/supervisor meetings so everybody can kind of learn from each other, learn what the other people in the departments are doing, here about the cool stuff that is happening, and get to see each other and participate with each other.”

Anne accomplished this by beginning strategic planning processes that furthered the efforts of her managers and supervisors to find “overarching strategic long-term key goals that everybody is striving to do, so, no matter what your position was in the department, you could understand how your work contributed to the success of the department.” Through using these collaborative efforts, “information is power, so reporting information gives your power... I get to see across the board all the cool work that is being done every day, where a subject matter expert knows their specific part, but I see the totality of it, and it is cool.”

When discussing her position and where she saw herself in her career, she said, “There was a disconnect between wanting to have a position like this and not feeling that I would be



able to get it, so that was part of it—just not feeling like I was being recognized for hard work, and needing to figure out what direction I needed to take, and that was one of the reasons why I wanted to get into the DPA program. I guess it would be a type of position that I would always hope but didn't know if it would ever really happen.”

When asked if she would want to be commissioner one day, she said, “I really don't know, because it is high-profile, and they will bash you continuously. You are in the press. You have to worry about every mistake that could potentially be made at your department, [and the onus] is on you, and I just didn't know if I wanted to take on that kind of public scrutiny. Well, I now have public scrutiny, and I have to deal with it, and so I guess this is the training ground to see if that is a position that I want to continue moving towards... I think I would.”

On her weaknesses, Anne said, “I have been trying to adopt being thorough in thinking through decisions, because every decision you make has multiple potential impacts, in a sense that there is a human element, and there could be a public element. I have been learning how to make decisions and be very comfortable with the decisions I make, and you do have to go out on a limb.” Anne's prior weakness had been risk-taking, but she emphasizes the social aspects of gender and “seeing what your own potential is, and that I think is potentially the difference between our socialized self as men and women, right? Men are often told that, well, let's just be honest...men are often so full of themselves that they believe that they are...projecting more confidence and having that belief that ‘I should be in this room.’ Owning the position and owning our potential is what I think is what I have to continue to work on.”

The themes found in Anne's narrative were:

1. Organizational influence
2. Cultural influence

3. Collaboration
4. Organizational change
5. Self vs. capabilities

**Narrative 4: Kit.** Kit retired as Director of St. Paul Public Libraries in 2015 but gave insights into organizational culture in the male-dominated housing finance world, where she was once Commissioner of the Minnesota Housing Finance Agency. Kit did not see herself in either of these positions, being initially interested in law and starting her career as a legal aid attorney. “What I thought I would do is, I would do race and gender class-action lawsuits. I actually worked on several, and I realized I didn’t even begin to have the temperament to do that. What I discovered was the Legal Services Advocacy Project, which was a lobbying project for low-income issues—issues affecting low-income people, and that is when I really fell in love.”

Through this involvement, Kit met the head of the Housing Finance Agency, because they were both working on the affordable housing bill, and then she was appointed the agency’s commissioner. “I would never, ever have seen myself...I didn’t see myself...I never had aspirations for kind of a political career. I wanted to be the head of something... I never said that to myself. I saw myself as more in a horizontal way, just finding different opportunities to contribute to social and economic justice. That is how I felt about my career. So it was very much a surprise, really, for me to end up as Commissioner of the Housing Finance Agency.”

At the time she worked for the Housing Finance Agency, “there were about 52 to 55 directors of either state or big local housing finance agencies, and there were seven women. The number didn’t really change over time, so, even though there were plenty of women in the workplace, I think when I was there all the managers were men...” Kit found that more women represented the aspects of business that dealt primarily with maintaining rental housing. “There

are more women in that, whereas the part of the business that was about making sure a rental building that you might finance was well underwritten and the numbers were...that is where you had particularly a lot of men. It was a culture that was really focused on making the numbers work, getting the legal documents together.”

Despite the good collegiality at the senior level, the housing finance world “is very siloed into multifamily and single-family, so there wasn’t a ton of crop collaboration, and there wasn’t enough of a policy spoken, from my point of view... There was a lot of transactional orientation, and I felt like we needed to be much more focused on the kind of the policy needs of the state.”

As commissioner, Kit created a collaborative approach to running the organization, in which she decided to “sort of spread out the decision-making, distribute decision-making a little more, to try to really focus. Just focus on the topics you see as middle managers, because I feel that one thing I learned, and I didn’t always do well at all—I mean, it is really hard—is that the culture and organization really depends a lot on middle managers.”

Kit also reflects on what needs to occur to create a more diverse culture: “No matter how committed senior leadership might be, how consistent they are in their language, how much they do around promoting racial equity in the organization, if your direct supervisor never utters the word ‘racial equity’ or brings up issues, then it isn’t a part of the culture of the organization. So the competency of middle manager is to pay attention to promoting the organizational culture that you all agree you want. It is really, really important, and I do feel like I tried to do that at all the places where I was the director.”

Kit believed in connecting with staff, as well as creating relationships in the workplace. “I had not only learned a lot about finance and budgeting, but one of the changes I made, compared to my predecessor, was to open up information about budgeting. Even the senior team

at Housing Finance Agency wasn't really involved with setting an annual budget during the time I wasn't the commissioner. So, when I got to be commissioner, I opened that up, and that was huge in terms of getting back some trust of the staff and the board and really opening up the budget process and really creating opportunities for input into suggesting what we might do about what was a really huge, huge budget problem."

Kit reflected on how her approach may have affected her relationships. "I think that I have an approach to relationships with staff. It was extremely testy that first year, and there are going to be plenty of people who still don't like me to this day. So I am not saying that I was winning any popularity contests, but I was trying to restore the trust and some, I don't know if collegiality is the right word, but I do have a way of connecting with staff that is genuine from my point of view... So I think they were very demoralized by the interim director and the director prior. They ignored the staff, and that is just not my style. So I think my style was helpful in terms of the importance of connecting, appreciating, and getting to know staff."

When asked about her weaknesses, Kit recalled, "I can get angry and flare... I would just say the fact that I was justified in being angry doesn't excuse the behavior...instead of dealing with them in a particular way. I feel like that is a lesson I learned during my Minneapolis time in particular, that even people who you really disagree with on either a policy basis, person basis or both, that there it is important to honor people, even people who you disagree with intently, that I disagree with intently...finding the place where you can honor people you disagree with and connect with them about the things that you share, which is passion for libraries or passion for affordable housing."

The themes found in Kit's narrative were:

1. Organizational influence

2. Cultural stigma
3. Collaboration
4. Transparency
5. Self vs. capabilities

**Narrative 5: Kim.** Kim is Chief of Regional Contracting for the Service Area Office Central (SAOC) Region within the Department of Veterans. She oversees six contract specialists who do acquisition planning and award contracts for 44 medical centers throughout the central region of the U.S. When asked if she believed a gender gap existed within her organization, she said, “I think there is a gender gap. I mean, just take the SAO Central Region—the deputy director and director are both males, and then we have the seven Network Contract Offices, and there is only one female DOC [director of contracting], and even within the SAO Central region there are three supervisors, and I am the lowest ranking supervisor, although our office has the most visible workload and the most critical workload and the most impact to patient care.”

Kim described the organizational culture as follows: “I think still there is that perception that we are assertive, or that we are perceived as bitchy, whereas, if my same position was someone that was male, they were perceived as being a go-getter, and I still think there is that perception. I think sometimes we can send an email and we don’t get a response, but if we put...my supervisor, as a CC on that, all of sudden we will get a response from that, and I think it is because we are female, and I think that is unfortunate that has to happen. Or we can send an email and we don’t get a response, but if we put the DOC on it, who is a male, we get a response.”

Kim sees the organizational culture within the contracting office as positive, because of the connections it builds with the end user and the customer. “I think the more that we are able to

work with the end user and the more we are able to work with logistics and show them that we understand that we do understand them and that we can perform, I think they take the blinders off, and they don't look at us as being female—they look at us as being their partners, but it is taking us a long time to work through that relationship.”

Kim is not unfamiliar with male-dominated organizations, having served in the military. “There are not very many women in the military, and you kind of have to work through that. When deployed, it was the same thing. You kind of...they look at you as, ‘Oh, you are just going to come in here and kind of tell us what to do,’ and you kind of have to work through this.”

On how her gender has affected her position: “I think part of it, I think, has helped me be a better supervisor, because I think I have understood...my staff has family, being understanding that sometimes, you know, being flexible in their schedules, or understanding that there are times that they need to take off, and just being flexible in that way. I have kids. I have raised kids. That, I think, has helped me understand that, and then just knowing that sometimes people are sensitive, and people have different personalities, and people have different ways of learning, and that you can't treat everybody the same...there can't be a cookie-cutter approach...”

Kim also recognizes gender-specific differences in gender roles within the organization. “I think women are a little bit more understanding of each other, I think, and are understanding of some of the customer needs sometimes. I think men sometimes are a little bit more blunt, so to speak, and I think that just because they are men they are owed something, versus I think women know that they have to work harder than men just because they are women.”

On her weaknesses in her role as chief, she reflects: “I know sometimes I react before I think things through, and I know sometimes there are things that get under my skin, and I react

before I really think things through. I know that I have a very loud voice, and sometimes I know it may seem like I am raising my voice at people, but, really, I am not raising my voice.”

The themes found in Kim’s narrative were:

1. Organizational resistance
2. Cultural influence
3. Self vs. capabilities
4. Collaboration

**Narrative 6: Becki.** Becki grew up around firehouses but never pictured herself in the role Assistant Chief of the Eden Prairie Fire Department. Upon first receiving recruiting material from the fire department in the mail, “When I received the mailer, it actually was addressed to me, and not my husband, and I laughed about it. I laughed about it, like, ‘Why are they sending this to me, and not you?’ It was strange that I even said that out loud, and it is just that women don’t see themselves in that role, so that is kind of our barrier that we are trying really hard to overcome, and it’s really hard to recruit people, because most people that go into the fire service, they want to be firefighters. They grow up thinking, ‘I want to do that, and that is what I want to be when I grow up.’ For us that was generally a male thing, right? So it is not something the girls ever dreamed about.”

Becki actually started working for the fire department on a volunteer basis while working on her master’s degree in education, and working as an elementary school teacher. After receiving her degree, she worked as both an educator and a firefighter: “...so I started as a paid on-call firefighter while I was teaching, so I overlapped and did both for about five years. Actually, when I was working on my master’s degree is when I joined the fire service. I did both. I taught and was on the fire department, and then I left teaching and went and worked for the

Minnesota State Fire Marshal's office. They were looking for a fire safety educator, which was a perfect combination for me, being an educator and a firefighter. So I worked there for five years, and then, when this full-time position on our department came open, I promoted into that, and now I just do this full time."

Becki grew in her firefighter role, from Lieutenant to Captain to Assistant Chief over the course of ten years. As Assistant Chief, she focuses on firefighter training and fire prevention, both educating her staff and being a resource for those attempting to move forward in their careers. "My role...each of the four assistant chiefs have different, like, swim lanes, essentially, and I am in charge of training for the department, and I am in charge of the prevention division, so, the inspection staff and public education staff, social media coordinator...that kind of thing. So I am in charge of making sure our 100 firefighters are certified, and I coordinate all the training. We train weekly. I coordinate all the extra class, putting people through EMT and apparatus operator and any other college courses related to the fire service people are interested in. I also coordinate our recruit academy. That is run through our whole...there is a group of six departments, ourselves, us and neighboring departments that all do a recruit academy together."

When Becki started, her department had only 3-4 female firefighters; now it has 13-14, out of 100 in her department. Miraculously, this number exceeds the national average of 3 percent. "There is a national study actually done by the International Association of Women. It is called 'i-Women,' and they have changed names recently. The International Association of Women and the Fire Service, I think, is their long name, but i-Women is the group. A study was done a couple of years ago that it is three percent nationally. We tried to do a study in Minnesota to see specifically what it is out in Minnesota, but, like I said, because we are predominantly paid on call on this kind of quasi-volunteer setup, nobody tracks that, so it is difficult to tell exactly



what the average is in Minnesota. Our department, though, we have a little over 100 people, and we have, I think it is 13 or 14 women, so we are actually...even though it seems very small, it is still so much above the national average.”

When asked about her organizational culture before she began as chief, she stressed the following: “...everyone was a volunteer in the quasi-volunteer mode. So the culture was a lot different. It was a lot looser, and not structured as it is now. The officers were voted on, so even the chief was voted. It was a popular vote setup, so if people liked you and you were kind of in the right place at the right time. That is how you became an officer, or sometimes if you were not there you were voted in. So it wasn’t always necessarily based on qualifications, although generally to serve as an officer in an organization like this you had to be intelligent and possess the capabilities to do it, otherwise the organization couldn’t move forward. So I am not putting down the people that were voted in, but it is a different setup than when you go through the regular application process and vetting and all of that.”

When asked about gender, she said, “I actually got a lot whenever I would kind of joke about the guys being guys. I was always told by certain people, ‘Well, you are the one that joined the boys club, so you can’t get mad when things are set up for guys, because you joined the boys club.’ That was said to me a lot when I first started, kind of to the point where I accepted that. It was like, ‘Oh, okay, well, it is not geared towards women, because I joined the boys club—silly me.’ That has changed completely. Even that comment alone wouldn’t be tolerated.”

Once Becki was hired as full-time Assistant Fire Chief, the way women were regarded in the department began to change as she was promoted. “When the press started making a big deal of ‘first female captain, first female assistant chief,’ the Chief of the Department’s response was always, ‘I didn’t hire you because of your gender, I hired you because you were the most

qualified person for the position.’ So, as much as it was kind of neat to celebrate being the first, it meant a lot more to me to hear that response...”

Beck stressed the support the department gave her when she began her position. “Yeah, when I got promoted to Assistant Chief, they rallied together and got me...well, they didn’t get me...they took some old hose and made a little plaque thing, you know, ‘Congratulations, we are so proud of you.’ Yeah, they’re just...you know, the camaraderie is great.”

Becki further emphasized how much more innovative and progressive the Eden Prairie Fire Department has been since she became its first female Assistant Fire Chief. “Right now, I think we are a very forward-leaning, progressive, professional department. We work a lot with our neighboring departments to make sure that...because firefighting is a team sport, so if we have a fire we call all of our neighbors, and we have to make sure we have enough people there to do all the jobs safely, and so we work really hard to train with our neighbors and understand how they operate, and they understand how we operate, and we are on the same page.

“Firefighting in the past had been very kind of ‘cowboy mentality,’ where people just kind of show up and they break stuff. They just kind of get it done by brute force, and now there is a lot of research that is happening and a lot of thought that goes into making sure things are safe and organized and planned out. I think that my organization...I am really proud of the fact that we are kind of on the front end of that.

One of the other assistant chiefs is female, Kelly, and she is on a national research board through UL for Safety Research Institute studying fire attacks. So not only are we aware of those new studies, but we have people that are serving on these national boards. I am tied in myself nationally through various organizations, and so the fact that we are on the front end of a lot of

the new stuff that is happening in the fire service in general just makes it that much more professional and forward-leaning.”

When asked about her future, she said, “I am working on my executive fire officer program through the National Fire Academy, which is a four year...it is similar to a graduate degree. It is very focused on the fire service, obviously. You go to the National Fire Academy for two weeks a year, and then you have to work on a large paper essentially every year, so you end up with four applied research projects when you are done. I am working on my third one right now, actually. So having that designation is pretty much meant to set you up for that chief role somewhere. I could see myself there. I don’t know if that is what is in the cards for me. I am really enjoying my role right now and my tie back to teaching.”

Becki loves teaching and misses it when reminiscing about her former job as a teacher for elementary school systems, but she uses the teaching tools she possess to teach firefighters and help them to move forward in their careers. She is a resource as well as silent supporter for her organization. The department’s dynamics now focus on educating firefighters so their careers can progress: to become a lieutenant, a two-year degree is required; to be a captain, a four-year degree; and to be a chief, a master’s degree.

The themes found in Becki’s narrative were:

1. Cultural influence
2. Self vs. capabilities
3. Collaboration
4. Organizational Change

### **Overarching Themes**

<b>Organizational change</b>	<b>Cultural influence</b>	<b>Self vs. capabilities</b>
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The participants constantly emphasized these themes, not by directly stating them, but by conveying their presence in their organizations and relating how the themes shaped organizational culture. The themes were also consistent with the theoretical frameworks of the Transformational Leadership Theory, in terms of defining the change patterns that occurred within the organizations as the participants led and/or are leading them.

**Organizational change.** This theme emerged from participants' discussions of the changes in their organizations over the course of their leadership. These discussions were primarily based on cultural as well as structural changes. Past research suggests that organizational change must have a purpose and a strategy for the components and processes of the change (Hage & Finsterbusch, 1989). However, no intentional structural or cultural change was imminent when the participants entered into leadership positions within their organizations; these changes resulted from their development as leaders, as well as their leadership styles.

The organizational change theme correlates well with organizational culture theory, because, when the participants became leaders, they created systems for changing some of their organizations' values, beliefs and assumptions through transformational leadership, an inspirational and motivational approach that emphasizes the development of strong, trusting relationships in which the subordinate feels comfortable with expressing ideas for the organization's growth. This type of leadership style is traditionally not seen in males, as past studies emphasize. For example, Porat (1991) suggests that male leaders tend to lead from the front, believing they must have all the answers for their employees. On the other hand, women often solicit contributions from their staff, through delegation of responsibility as well as encouragement of their staff to collaborate within the organization to make it successful. Female leaders also emphasize building relationships with their subordinates to gain not only knowledge

of what is happening within the organization but also ideas for making it more efficient. These are some ways organizational change confirms that women in leadership roles tend to be less hierarchical than male leaders, and seem more fulfilled in their leadership roles by establishing a team-building approach (Porat, 1991). Organizational change is also significant for the participants' success at changing their organizations' cultures with minimal employee resistance, as employee cooperation is essential to changing an organization's dynamics.

The theme of building a more inclusive organization, as opposed to being authoritative in their leadership approaches, recurred throughout participants' narratives, because they encouraged their subordinates to contribute to the leadership while making their own contributions within their organization (Porat, 1991). Many participants also emphasized an inclusive approach as an antidote to siloing, or individualizing departments so that each did not know the functions of the others, which fragmented the organization.

In addition, the female leaders sought to create dynamic organizational change without shifting their organizations' main goals and values of that organization. This confirms the literature's findings that subordinates tend to highly value feminine characteristics, which can lead to more contributions from them, as well as higher morale and harmony in task-oriented efforts (Payne, Fuqua, & Canegami, 1997). This rejects previous studies that called for women to take on roles and styles similar to men in order to enjoy leadership success (Del la Rey, 2005).

***Organizational change: Analysis of narratives.*** The narratives confirmed that the change of organizational culture through transformational leadership could be an effective tool within governmental agencies: it not only inspires employees to progress in their work-related outcomes, but also reduces turnovers and encourages employees to contribute more to the organization. When addressing women in administrative and/or executive roles, some literature

suggested that women tended to be more ‘man-like’ and imitate traditional male leadership roles to survive within their organization (Porat, 1991; Ward et al., 2010). The participants negated those patterns through their actions as leaders by making their marks within their organizations through their transformational leadership approaches.

“One of the goals was to create a more collaborative culture at the department and to break down all of those silos, and so one of the things that I wanted to do once I started was, we do monthly manager/supervisor meetings so everybody can kind of learn from each other, learn what the other people in the department are doing, hear about the cool stuff that is happening, and get to see each other and participate with each other,” one participant said. “We also kicked off a huge strategic plan process, which was really collaborative in nature and took the input of all staff, and it required a lot of hands-on work from our managers and supervisors, and the goal there was to find overarching strategic long-term key goals that everybody is striving to do, so no matter what your position was in the department, you could understand how your work contributed to the success of the department.” To create a more inclusive atmosphere, she had to bring her departments together so the staff as a whole could become more familiar with the organization’s practices and policies.

Participant narratives also negate past research that suggests that the difference between male and female leadership styles are small. Each participant changed her organizational structure through a transformational approach not initially used in the organization. Furthermore, the women moved their organizations beyond the transactional leadership approach to a more communicative one, in which subordinates participated in their organization’s success.

Yet the narratives also substantiated literature stating that women who pursue non-traditional leadership roles (such as the participants) reject traditional or stereotypical feminine

roles and characteristics by offering attributes like those of their male counterparts (De La Rey, 2005). The participants did not see themselves as different from men in leadership ability but merely saw a broken system and proceeded to change it.

Before one participant became a leader in her organization, “the culture was a lot different,” she said. “It was a lot looser and not structured as it is now. The officers were voted on, so even the chief was voted. It was a popular vote setup, so if people liked you and you were kind of in the right place at the right time, that is how you became an officer, or sometimes if you were not, then you were voted in. So it wasn’t always necessarily based on qualifications, although generally to serve as an officer in an organization like this you had to be intelligent and possess the capabilities to do it, otherwise the organization couldn’t move forward. So I am not putting down the people that were voted in, but it is a different setup than when you go through the regular application process...it was different.”

Yet this leadership’s dynamics changed when she assumed the helm. “Right now I think we are a very forward-leaning, progressive, professional department. We work a lot with our neighboring departments to make sure that...because firefighting is a team sport, so if we have a fire, we call all of our neighbors, and we have to make sure we have enough people there to do all the jobs safely, and so we work really hard to train with our neighbors and understand how they operate, and they understand how we operate, and we are on the same page. Firefighting in the past had been very kind of cowboy mentality, where people just kind of show up and they break stuff. They just kind of get it done by brute force, and now there is a lot of research that is happening and a lot of thought that goes into making sure things are safe and organized and planned out. I think that my organization...I am really proud of the fact that we are kind of on the front end of that. One of the other assistant chief’s is female, Kelly, and she is on a national

research board through UL for [the] Safety Research Institute studying fire attack. So not only are we aware of those new studies, but we have people that are serving on these national boards.” This exemplifies how the participants built their organizations’ strengths by moving away from inefficient organizational standards and traditional leadership approaches.

This included moving away from the “good ol’ boy” atmosphere by creating more diversity within their work environment, as one participant related: “We had 14 people in senior staff, and one was a woman. When I came, that made it two women, and then I got to hire a deputy, and I hired a woman. My business programs person retired. I hired a woman. Our single-family housing director retired, and we restructured a bit, and my multifamily housing person retired shortly after I came, so at first there wasn’t anybody except me, so we combined our housing programs together, and I hired a woman there. So now, on our senior staff we are not where I want to be, but we are getting there. Two of the four program directors are women. My deputy took another job, so she is gone. I am there, and my public information officer. On our senior staff we now have four women as opposed to one, so we are making progress. I think my area directors are all good guys, and they see the need to...they think it is important also to have some diversity. With our program and the way we hire, the national office determines the process for hiring, which is crazy ridiculous, and it is really hard to get diversity when you are experiencing some of these things that many, many populations that are diverse don’t have.”

This confirms the literature’s conclusions about new women leaders becoming more aware of the hegemonic masculinity often associated with individualism, competitiveness and high authority, which strays from the transformative atmosphere these women seek to develop. The participants also recognize that, in some instances, this homogenous atmosphere can often be out of their control, due to government red tape and/or loopholes that hinder creation of the



diversity within these organizations (De La Rey, 2005). Another participant stresses, “I was always told by certain people, ‘Well, you are the one that joined the boys’ club, so you can’t get mad when things are set up for guys, because you joined the boys’ club.’” That was said to me a lot when I first started, kind of to the point where I accepted that. It was like, ‘Oh, okay, well, it is not geared towards women, because I joined the boys’ club—silly me.’ That has changed completely. Even that comment alone wouldn’t be tolerated.”

The participants’ narratives support literature that suggests that the key reasons for performance reforms were based upon not only formal oversight, but also changes in norms and values on the front lines (Destler, 2016). The participants both became leaders in traditionally male-dominated roles and assisted in the front lines through their individualized styles of leadership, to create subtle reforms by changing norms and values through their front-line staff.

Although the participants acknowledged gender discrepancies within their organizations, they capitalized on those discrepancies by changing their leadership methods. One participant emphasized the need for middle management: “We actually undertook a really organized, intentional effort with the senior and middle managers to try to create more of a culture of initiative. We specifically called it that. So we did that, and that was very necessary. I would say the director before me had been very command-and-control, and had actually created a lot of division among the senior management, which was very, very unhealthy. There was a lot of conflict. It was not a collaborative environment, so I felt that I had a big cultural challenge.” Other participants did not see their middle managers similarly but viewed all of their staff as key in creating the change needed for a successful organization.

Two participants ensured that they led and coordinated their organizational cultures differently from their male counterparts. Most used an integrational leadership approach that

emphasized staff consensus while upholding their organization's missions and values. One participant, however, took a differentiation tactic, because subcultures were dispersed throughout the organization, leading to inconsistencies within leadership roles. Many found that their unique leadership procedures created stronger cultural values, staff performance, participatory decision-making practices, and more accountability within their organizations.

**Cultural influence.** The cultural influence theme was frequent in participant interviews, which was not surprising, as many stressed the relevance of their leadership style changes within their organization. Moreover, cultural influence fell in line with transformational leadership theory, as a leadership style that "motivates followers to exceed expectations in pursuit of an organization's vision as well as sacrifice self-interests for the collective good" (Groves & LaRocca, 2012, p. 215). The narratives confirmed the literature's statements of a transformational leader's chief characteristics: vision, charisma, inspiration, intellectual stimulation, creativity, individual consideration, honesty/integrity, and confidence/optimism (Friedman, Langbert & Giladi, 2000). The participants implied that they embodied these characteristics, not through self-descriptions, but rather through narratives of events that transpired during their leadership. They harnessed the above characteristics to enable their subordinates to participate within their organization and excel in their performance. The narratives implied that transformational leadership let the participants create a foundation in which the employees are the organization's main success factor.

By creating a structure that encouraged their employees to be innovative as well as cognizant of what is occurring within their organization so they could assist with organizational change, the participants confirmed the literature's assertion that transformational leadership has the power to motivate an employee, which can improve their motivation as well as performance,

and that transformational leadership empowers employees to perform successfully within their organizations (Kark, Shamir & Chen, 2003). Such leadership built an atmosphere that allowed for growth, teaching, mentoring, and learning.

The cultural influence theme in the narratives confirms two other findings in the literature: (1) personal values, as well as the organization's common good, influenced the participants' leading style (Groves & LaRocca, 2012), and (2) male leadership positions are often seen as positions of power/authority, in which the leader gives his subordinates the solution to a problem, as opposed to encouraging subordinates to brainstorm and problem-solve on their own, without the open environment of sharing information among departments. This can create hostility within a workforce, as well as the aforementioned silo effect that had existed within many of the participants' organizations prior to their leadership.

The narratives also confirm past research indicating that subordinates highly value, and often prefer, more 'feminine' characteristics in their female leaders (Payne, Fuqua & Canegami, 1997). For example, women are more relationship-oriented, and their behaviors often fall more in line with accepted social codes. This also suggests that sex-role stereotypes can emerge while influencing personality development patterns within their organization. Yet the culture influence theme rejects the notion that women must adapt masculine characteristics and come across as "alphas" to successfully lead in male-dominated organizations (Ward, Popson & DiPaolo, 2010). In truth, the participants are strong leaders through the relationship-oriented atmosphere they created within their organization, which is more receptive to subordinates' participation in the leadership process than previous male-dominated leadership methods.

*Cultural influence: Analysis of narratives.* The participants' leadership shifted not only the structures of their organizations, but also the cultural influences within them. This shift began

when the participants evolved the organizations from their silo structures into team-oriented environments through a collaboration process. Through collaboration, “I believe that there is room for everyone to shine,” said one participant. “You don’t have to hold everything so you can look better than someone else. We can all succeed and all look good in the process.”

Collaboration was thus key to the participants’ success in their positions, as was the open-door process: “When you have worked in an organization for a long, long period of time, you don’t see things that maybe could be done better,” said another participant. “I think that I have been helpful. I think people are comfortable talking to me about things. I think that has been helpful. I do have an open-door policy. Not that they talk to me about everything, and I am sure they don’t, but people aren’t afraid to bring things up that they think could be changed, or... I think we have brought a culture of ‘It’s important to talk about how we can change things.’ You might not get what you want, but at least you have had the opportunity to talk about it.”

The open-door process has been effective for this participant: it enabled her to give her employees an opening to explore solutions to organization problems and become innovative in those solutions. She stresses that her employees may not get what they asked for but that they realize that she hears them and acknowledges their contributions within the organization.

The creation of a more collaborative, open-door atmosphere also falls in line with the literature’s assertion that transformational leaders motivate their subordinates as a collective body, thus their influences are often applied across the entire organization (Zhang, et al, 2015). Furthermore, transformational leaders not only work collaboratively with their subordinates but also address them individually, modifying their behavior toward subordinates based on their individual needs and/or capabilities. “That, I think, has helped me understand that, and then just knowing that sometimes people are sensitive, and people have different personalities, and people

have different ways of learning, and that you can't treat everybody the same," said a participant. "There can't be the cookie-cutter approach. It is like kids: not all kids react to the same type of learning or react even to the same type of punishment. Some kids you can put in the corner, and that is devastating to them. Some kids you can spank with a belt, and that is devastating to them, but you put the same kid in the corner and it doesn't do anything to them. So I think that has helped a lot—just understanding those different things in people."

Participants also valued the need for general communication with their staff. Each offered an open-door policy that created a sense of belonging in the workplace, which made staff feel safe communicating their ideas and concepts. One participant said she may not have used all of the ideas presented to her, but saw the open dialogue as essential to building and fostering a trusting relationship with her staff. Another said her staff needed to push her to do her best and give her feedback on her performance. In fact, she relied on their knowledge to assist in the organization's growth: "I know a sliver of the knowledge carried by our longtime staff here, and they are the ones that make this a great place. It is not me. I am just trying to make sure that...I am herding cats, but they are the ones that are keeping us going, and they are the benefit to the state of Minnesota. I have so much respect for my colleagues." Another said, "I think it is really important for people who are actually doing the work, listening to them about how it could be done better. I am a firm believer in that, and I think that is what is important to the organization."

Intellectual stimulation was also a key component in one participant's leadership: "I'm all about making sure that everybody has access to everything they need to be successful, and then also that the standard is set and very clearly articulated and everyone understands that here is the bar, these are our minimums, and everyone is going to be held to that bar, regardless of who you are, or when you came in, or any of that. So we have gone back, and some people that were kind

of grandfathered in to not have to be EMTs when we transitioned to EMTs have all since stepped up. Everyone else in an EMT, and this is where the bar is, and I want to be there, too. Just having those clear expectations, I think. I run a lot of this stuff very similarly to how I was trained as an educator. The students need to know what the expectations are, and then my role is to support them and give them anything they need in order to meet those expectations. If they want to take extra classes or they want to get a certification in something, I will chase down what they need to have that certification and how the department can support them, finding grant funding in order to pay for those classes, and all of that. That is my role, so I still play that very...teacher role in making sure people have what they need, but also I instituted an online training tracking program and credentialing program and LMS system, so now the firefighters can go in and have access to their certifications and know when their things expire and have all of that at their fingertips, too.”

By giving the subordinates the tools to succeed, the participants confirm the literature’s suggestion that transformational leaders build their followers to become leaders in their own right, to build on their own careers. These narratives signify that the relationships the participants build with their staff are crucial to not only the organization’s success, but also the betterment of its cultural aspects and the development of subordinates’ individual career and leadership goals.

**Self vs. capabilities.** The researcher’s interview question also recognized that cultural influence and organizational change require the participant to contribute her own self to the organization’s transformation. The self vs. capabilities theme established who these women are and how they came to lead their organizations, thus enabling the researcher to determine the extent to which their “selves” were key agents of the organizational change.

Self vs. capabilities must be acknowledged, because the participants may have been executive leaders who were unsure if they wanted to move beyond their current positions, or they

may have elected to do so. Many were deputies and/or assistants to the chief and were unsure about becoming chief and/or comfortably retired in their subordinate roles. The participants knew they could handle the role of chief but were either unclear on their vision for it or not interested in considering the role's future for them. Only one was receiving the education to prepare for it, though she still preferred to collaborate with her employees rather than taking on the chief's more political role. Many appreciated the impacts they were already making on their organization in their present roles and were thus satisfied with them.

*Transformational Leadership Theory.* The self vs. capabilities theme significantly related to the Transformational Leadership Theory, which, as mentioned, is developed within an organization when its leader forms a relationship-oriented environment of motivation, influence, intellectual stimulation and employee participation (Orazi et al, 2013). Therefore, the theme is key in examining the ways the participants' leadership styles and capabilities established the dynamic shifts within their organizations. Their desire for stronger communication and more inclusive leadership was consistent throughout their narratives.

Relationship building and seeking were their primary strengths. Some were also strong in analytical skills, but all needed to seek relationships within and outside their organizations to achieve goals, visions and values for them. This demanded their subordinates' input. Moreover, without her recognition of her strengths and weaknesses, a participant would have lacked the buy-in from her subordinates she needed to develop the desired transformational environment.

As prior literature stressed, the leader's transformational leadership and "self" is key in this context, because it also confirms that literature's dictum that a leader's meaningful engagement of the employee ensures that both subordinates and leader achieve organizational goals and transcend to a higher level of morality and motivation within the organization (Pradhan

& Pradhan, 2016). This is significant when exploring 'self,' because the participants both directly and indirectly want to ensure positive outcomes within their organization, for the subordinates as well as themselves. In the context of self vs. capabilities, the participant must develop a transformational environment impossible to establish in higher echelon positions due to their political nature. By obtaining those positions (e.g., chief), the participant may not be able to make as strong of an impact on their organization as she presently does. Furthermore, a transformational leadership style may not be appropriate in a chief position, as it is deemed political, and subordinates tend to make less direct contact with these higher positions than with the participants in the relationship the subordinates established with them.

Another element of self vs. capabilities is the participant's personal values and how they correlate with her transformative leadership style and relationship with her subordinates. Past studies showed that personal values of leaders strongly influence their transformational leadership process; in contrast, the leader also finds herself engaging in actions that sacrifice her own self-gain for the betterment of their subordinates and organization as a whole (Groves & LaRocca, 2012). The narratives confirm that female leaders want their subordinates and organizations to succeed yet lack a clear path or decision on where they themselves want to be in the future, and that the participants are aware of their indirect correlation of personal values and their impacts within their organizations.

*Glass ceiling theory.* This theory also plays an extensive role in these narratives, because the participants extensively detailed their penetrations through the gendered barriers in their male-dominated organizations to become effective leaders within them. In the beginning they acknowledged facing challenges with their male counterparts, as past research suggests, but once they fell into their new executive roles they negated the literature's theory that they were likely



to either receive organizational support or be excluded from the organization's social network (Lyness & Thompson, 1997). The self vs. capabilities theme emphasized that the women were the key to building the inclusive social network within their organizations, which in turn welcomed the relationship-oriented approach these women introduced.

In discussing self vs. capabilities, we must also determine whether the glass ceiling exists in the aforementioned circumstances. Prior research suggests that, if so, many social norms may contribute to its existence: job ladders, personnel policies, women's low aspirations, conflicts between work and home, recruitment practices, etc. (Cotter, Hermsen, Ovadia, & Vanneman, 2001) In this instance, the research asserts the glass ceiling's existence based on the women's aspirations and desires to increase their capabilities through promotion to chief. In light of this, the participants confirmed the research findings that they may not desire or yearn to move past those roles, either satisfied to retire where they were or lacking a clear vision for their future. The latter could signify low aspirations for venturing forward in their careers, which confirms the glass ceiling's existence in their organizations, regardless of the organizations' promotion policies, the participants' home/work dynamics, or the proverbial job ladder.

*Self vs. capabilities: Analysis of narratives.* The participants experienced struggles with the frequent dichotomy between self-identification and personal capabilities. Most did not initially see themselves within their executive roles and had not desired higher positions than what they already had achieved.

One participant was initially not interested in law enforcement but later wanted to prove to her colleagues and to other women taking her type of position that women were capable of success in it. She was also happy to retire in her present one; she did not mind being number two (though her capabilities exceeded that): "I am a great second, because I am very analytical, and I

am very strategic. I don't want to be in front of the media. That is not me. People tell me I am a great speaker, but I don't want to be out there. Let me be behind the scenes and do the digging and try to strategize on how we can solve a problem, and I am great at that. So I am a great second. So I had no problem being second or being in charge of the juvenile unit.”

The organization did promote her, but only within the juvenile unit. At first this might appear to be a form of pigeonholing, but that is not how the participant viewed this move. She enjoyed working with children and did not mind working with schools and families as well. Her narrative expressed a sense of empowerment that derived from her description of her roles within her organization. The participant built on these responsibilities by building relationships with the children and families with whom she worked, as well as conceiving ways for the school to develop a better rapport between office, school and child.

Interestingly, the beginning of her career reflected resistance to male authority from a female officer in the organization. At that time the chief of the organization merely wanted to the participant to conform to the male-dominated traditions. She did so to some degree but did not let that define her success within her role. In the end, “we ended up putting a committee together, and it had a juvenile judge from the juvenile court, it had a juvenile caseworker out of the juvenile division, it had the police, and it had a school representative. So we actually had a group of us that met once a month and tried to address some of these issues that came up. So that was something that was created while I was around. I don't even know if it still goes on now, but that is what we talk about when we talk about system changes—you know, how do we interact with each other to say, ‘Here is what I identify as a problem from my end, and what can you do from your end?’ Then when it gets to a court for the judge, the judge has some idea of what did work and what didn't work in the preventative measures that were set up.” This enabled the

participant's ability to both use her strengths and work around the extant male-dominated dynamics simultaneously.

Another participant wrestled with the idea of moving beyond her current position: her narrative revealed a struggle between her capabilities and how she personally saw herself in a higher position: "There was disconnect between wanting to have a position like this and not feeling that I would be able to get it, so that was part of it—just not feeling like I was being recognized for hard work and needing to figure out what direction I needed to take, and that was one of the reasons why I wanted to get into the DPA program. I guess it would be a type of position that I would always hope [for], but I didn't know if it would ever really happen."

This disconnection between self and capabilities was intriguing, because the participant offered a transformative approach based on confidence in her abilities to create change. In fact, before her deputy commissioner role, she was director of communications. The literature often regarded this as more of a feminine role, but it served her well in the positive change she was trying to create for her organization.

Another participant is preparing for advancement through continuing education but enjoys her current position. She works directly with her staff rather than assuming the more political role of chief, but she is confident she would succeed in that role: "I am working on my executive fire officer program through the National Fire Academy, which is a four-year...it is similar to a graduate degree. It is very focused on the fire service, obviously. You go to the National Fire Academy for two weeks a year, and then you have to work on a large paper essentially every year, so you end up with four applied research projects when you are done. I am working on my third one right now, actually. So having that designation is pretty much meant to set you up for that chief role somewhere. I could see myself there. I don't know if that is what

is in the cards for me...I have learned not to set a course for myself, and just let things line up, because five years ago I would have never imagined myself here full time.”

The participant recognized her organization’s gender discrepancies but also appreciated the camaraderie and respect she received from both her chief and her male counterparts upon becoming assistant chief. She emphasized that she was hired based on her capabilities, not her gender, and that in her role, she could view her job in a different light: “We have the same expectations for everyone, and, really, firefighting...there is a lot of brute strength needed, but there is also a lot of logic and ability to think ahead of the game and figure out resource allocation, and it is as much a thinking process as it is a physical process. Women have more leg strength, and men have more upper-body strength, and so it’s really...once you figure out what your personal strengths are and how you can accomplish the same things using a different muscle group or a different technique...it might take me a few more swings to get something done, but I know that I have the ability to do it, because it is expected, and I figured out a way to do it, but also I bring a different set of talents. You have five people walk up and look at a building that is on fire they are going to see...I was going to say five different things, but they are probably going to see fifteen different things happening, right? It is not necessarily a gender thing, but I’m usually thinking about...I see a whole big-picture thing, and I’m a details person, so I notice a lot of the details that maybe somebody that has a lot of physical strength might not be looking at it the same way, because they know they can accomplish...I can knock down that door just by pure strength, whereas I look at it and go, ‘Okay, well, I know I can’t do the door, but how can I...? Oh, I see this thing over here. Maybe we can make entry that way.’ So I’m always looking for the alternatives rather than the obvious, and so...I think it is just keying into what your personal strengths are and not necessarily a gender thing. I work out a couple...two or

three times a week just to lift weights and stuff and just to build the strength in order to do my job, and it's just about figuring out techniques to do it. There are men on our department who don't. I would say I am stronger than some of them. It's not a gender thing—it is just a personal commitment and dedication and abilities thing.”

This confirms the importance of diverse representation and its ability to tie in with the organization's overall success. This also confirms the literature's viewpoint that more diversity allows for a leadership innovation that looks beyond an organization's norms. The participant also translated her youth-teaching skills from her prior career into her present one by ensuring that her staff had the proper educational requirements to advance within the organization.

## **Chapter 5: Discussion / Conclusion / Insights / Recommendations**

### **Discussion**

The researcher asks: How, and in what ways, have female leaders in traditionally male-dominated organizations influenced the culture of their organizations? To answer this question, the researcher developed questions that would enable participants to reflect on their careers as leaders within male-dominated organizations and to narrate their stories and experiences in detail as they viewed them throughout their careers. These questions were not only geared toward the leadership of the participants but also designed to enable participants to offer a perspective on where they were in their careers, how they got there, and how the culture of their organizations had changed since their promotions into their leadership positions. The participants' narrations often sparked thought-provoking conversation, as well as follow-up questions that initiated stories of events that influenced their paths to leadership and/or shaped their leadership.

The three recurring themes that emerged from the interview process—Organizational Change, Cultural Influence, and Self vs. Capabilities—helped to build the answer to the aforementioned research question. The researcher found that organizational transformations occurred within the participants' workplace environments as they established themselves as leaders. These changes did not happen based on their gender, but rather as a result of their leadership methods within their organizations. These three themes seemed to be intertwined within the narratives, but each theme was key to all aspects of all narratives.

Before the participants assumed their positions, their organizations had taken an individualized approach to leadership based on the siloing of each department from the rest of the organization, and its male leaders did not recognize the inefficiencies this fragmentation was creating. Siloing also limited the input of the staff by limiting the chance for change within those

departments. Also, the organizations lacked diversity and were homogenous, often defined by the terms “good ol’ boys’ club” or “boys’ club.” This lack of diversity was based upon government hiring practices, as well as female employees’ career interests and/or education levels. As prior literature suggests, women who enter into traditionally male-dominated academic or professional fields were more likely to leave and/or be pushed out due to gender-biased policies or decisions, underrepresentation, and/or established cultural stereotypes.

When most participants entered their chosen executive leadership positions, they recognized the value of diversity and worked to hire more women as well as people of color. The participants also recognized the difficulty of the hiring process for women and people of color, often based on federal government policies and regulations that hindered the hiring of a more diverse crew, or the supposition that women and/or persons of color were not interested in the career fields they were in and/or lacked the education and/or skill set to fulfill the roles.

Organizational change occurred through each participant’s transformational leadership, which included communicating more openly, working collectively, accomplishing more through team efforts, and encouraging more dynamic, innovative work approaches. All participants wanted to hear from their subordinates and make them feel part of the decision-making process, believing they would not have been as successful in their positions had they not done so. This set the tone for more open, collaborative dynamics within the organization. The participants may not have always agreed with their employees, but they wanted the open dialogue necessary to keep the organization fresh with advanced thinking.

The participants also insisted that all departments know what occurs daily within the organization, as a means of moving away from the traditional siloed approach. They also stressed the importance of their relationships with their employees, which enabled them to stimulate their

employees to perform better. Past literature insists that the transformational leadership approach is often more popular among subordinates.

Interestingly, all participants credited their male mentors as contributors to their success, even though the participants' leadership styles did not correlate with those of their male mentors. Past literature suggests that male leaders offer a more individualized leadership approach that can be considered more competitive, directive and autocratic—the opposite of the collaborative leadership styles each participant offered.

The participants maximized their cultural influence on their organizations through a more collaborative, open-door leadership. The researcher does believe that gender played a slight role in this influence, based on the female characteristics participants described. These were not what past literature would call “nurturing and motherly,” but were more interactive and collaborative. They also made the participants more visible to their followers than male leaders tended to be.

The participants also believed in educating their staff to take more active roles in the organization's development. They acknowledged prior gender stereotypes and/or past biases within their organization but distanced themselves from them by emphasizing what they could offer as leaders that would combat those stereotypes. Past literature suggests that female leader characteristics include empathy, willingness to compromise and cooperate, and intuition. These characteristics enabled all participants to create more collaborative work environments.

The researcher found that self-identity was as important as capabilities in answering the main research question, as that theme was indirectly discussed throughout the interviews.

Participants were also asked where they saw themselves in their organizations' future. Two had retired, satisfied with how far they had come. One was content in her position and was fine with being “number two,” for she recognized that her strengths lay in her ability to analyze



data, present them to her organization and the schools in which she played her leadership role, and thus influence the directions of her organization and the schools. An unretired participant said she would do well if promoted to a higher position but recognized that moving forward would be difficult because of her organization's current gender. Another said she enjoyed her present position and her interaction with the employees and was unsure of the political aspect of her superior's position, but she is pursuing training and education to qualify for it in the future.

When the participants' strengths and weaknesses were addressed, most of their weaknesses were apparently based on what past literature deemed to be "feminine characteristics," and their strengths were based on prior literature's notion of "masculine characteristics." Although most participants used the transformational leadership approach the literature would consider characteristic of women, they said these feminine characteristics were considered weaknesses in their workplaces.

"When I am frustrated, I cry, and it's a weakness for me, because I feel like it is a gender assumption, and I don't believe it is," said one participant. "I think that is just the way I am—wired—and it is something that I work on. That is one of my biggest struggles...and I almost take it as a putdown on myself and our gender, because I usually will say something like, 'Oh, I hate being a girl!' and then I get mad at myself, because this has nothing to do with me being a girl. It is just the way I'm wired. When I get frustrated, I cry, and I just have to control that. I phrase that as a putdown, because it is socially acceptable for me to say, 'Oh, I'm being a girl.'" Although emotions can be construed in a positive light and seen as a source of compassion, they are often seen as a source of weakness and femininity, which equates to not being strong.

However, a participant whose feminine characteristics were seen as weaknesses saw them as strengths by which she built workplace relationships: "I think to a certain extent I have been

willing to take risks and try things that I haven't thought about trying before. I have also felt that relationships are really important to me and really critical in my personal life and in my public life. When you build your relationships, you build them before you need them. I like people—I do. So that part is always fun for me and always interesting, and it is also interesting, depending on what your position is at that point, as to what relationships you build, and what relationships you keep, and what relationships really were just because of where you were.”

More than one participant considered leadership's educational component to be crucial. One had accomplished much in her position but still felt limited by having no college degree: “Let me start with the weakness. I don't have a college degree, which, you know, I should have gone back, and did it, had it and got it done, and I didn't. I have had great opportunities. I have done a lot of training. I did the JFK School at Harvard. I have done NYU in leadership. I have been to a multitude of different classes and training programs over the years. I was a Policy Fellow at Humphrey. I was a Policy Fellow at Missouri. I just never transferred it into a degree, and I should have. So that is a huge limiting factor for me, both in my brain and...without a degree people don't look at you like they do with one so that limiting...I don't think I will go back and finish my degree. I take various classes at various times that interest me, so I don't have a degree in education, but I have done a lot of different things.”

These strengths and weaknesses defined the participants as the leaders they are today, by not only who they lead, but also their recognition of their weaknesses and their use of them to strengthen their leadership.

## **Conclusion**

The researcher asked: How, and in what ways, have female leaders in traditionally male-dominated organizations influenced the culture of their organizations? The answer is twofold:

**1. The participant's gender did influence the culture of the traditionally male-dominated organization, through their presence.** When the participants began their leadership roles, their organizations were largely white male-dominated. As they developed as leaders, they added more diversity to their organizations, which changed the dynamics significantly. They recognized that these changes occurred, but also that, based on government hiring practices, improvements were still necessary for the organization to offer equality and diversity among its staff. The women also influenced their culture through their changes by developing a more transformational leadership approach, which conduced to better communication, as well as a relationship-oriented atmosphere that promoted collaboration, hence better staff performance.

The participants have not let their gender's underrepresentation affect their leadership. Many said their gender was not the reason for their promotion to their roles; the catalysts were the skills they provided and their qualifications for handling their positions, all of which enabled them to establish team-focused departments that had not been present before.

**2. The influence of a culture extends far beyond how employees get along and what relationships they have.** The participants said that the influence of a culture established how they functioned as leaders and how their employees performed. If good leaders are not present, employees are less likely to perform at their best. When employees are allowed to be part of a more innovative, inclusive atmosphere in which they can present their ideas and be listened to, they are more willing to work hard and are more dedicated to their leaders and organization. Conversely, a siloed approach to leadership separates departments within an organization, which leaves it fragmented, hence less productive. By establishing collaborative relationships within their organizations and keeping lines of communication open, these leaders give their employees the tools and/or resources to perform at their maximum capacity, hence advance their careers.

The participants do recognize their gender's underrepresentation within their organizations but do not let it define them as leaders in furthering their organizations' success. Past literature suggested that women are more likely to leave leadership positions and/or "fall in line" with more masculine traditions. These participants have done the opposite: refusing to adapt, imitate or conform to masculine traditions and characteristics, they used their own strengths, feminine characteristics and personal leadership styles to refocus their organizations.

### **Insights**

Several defining insights arose during the research process:

#### **1. Female leaders emphasized relationships when leading an organization.**

Relationships were key to creating a transformational leadership atmosphere, and the employees preferred this type of engagement in their leader because it let them be open in discussion with their leader on innovative ways to improve their organization's efficiency. They also praised the transformational approach for bringing them out of a siloed atmosphere so they could know more about what is transpiring within the organization. This leadership style is less likely to occur under male leadership, because past literature suggests, and participants' narratives confirm, that men tend to be more authoritative.

#### **2. A less diverse atmosphere in a public-sector organization can stagnate its growth.**

Before the participants assumed leadership roles in their organizations, they had to adjust their habits to meet male standards. As they developed as leaders, they could change the dynamics of the workplace culture, which enabled them to meet the standards of their new positions.

#### **3. Cultural influence plays a key role in public administration.** Without their subordinates' support, the participants would not have transformed their workplace atmospheres, suggesting that employees are the biggest influences on office culture. If unsatisfied with the

styles of their leaders, employees may not buy in to the leadership process, which thwarts the desired change. Cultural influence within an organization is truly based on employees' perceptions of what that change will do for the organization as a whole. Though the participants brought forth their transformational concepts, they needed their employees to be comfortable with this new style of leadership to let it succeed. The participants opened the door to a more collaborative, innovative leadership approach, but their 'will' and participation was needed for the participants to lead successfully. Though these women were in male-dominated organizations, their collaborative leadership style and ability to connect with their subordinates, rather than their gender, made them successful in improving the flow of the overall organization.

This research is valuable for public administration, because it brings the concepts of transformational leadership and diversity into public-sector organizations. It also confirms that leaders of male-dominated organizations need not be "white, middle-aged men," the organization need not be authoritative to be successful, and subordinates tend to work harder when free to innovate and collaborate within their organization. Likewise, the female leader participants worked more diligently when familiar with their organizations' daily operations.

Interestingly, the participants wanted their employees to advance through education and training as well as improved workflow, but lacked that vision for their own careers. Though they felt comfortable leading their organization and potentially becoming chiefs within it, they either (1) did not consider the direction of their future or (2) were not interested in moving beyond their current positions. That is, they were 'standing in their own paths to their futures' by caring more about the common good of their employees and organizations than their own advancement. Furthermore, they stressed that their subordinates were key in establishing a strong organization, and that subordinates' work improves when they have a say in the organization's operations.

This is important in public administration because of its typically hierarchical, authoritative atmosphere and lack of the innovation and collaboration necessary for its growth.

This research points at the popular misconceptions of women's ability to lead executively, thus negating past literature's premise that they are more likely to leave male-dominated organizations because of lack of full social acceptance. The participants insisted that their subordinates and/or other executive staff welcomed their advancement into more executive roles, which enabled them to lead more effectively.

### **Recommendations**

**The male perspective.** The researcher recommends additional inquiry from the male perspective when exploring women's influence on an organization's culture through leadership, particularly a man's view of a woman entering an executive leadership position in a male-dominated organization, and the degree to which a male's leadership style would change as a woman's leadership approach comes into play.

**The employee perspective.** The participants' narratives were based on their own experiences of introducing transformational leadership into their organizations, but investigation into employees' viewpoints on this new leadership, its benefits for their organization, and the resultant change of culture would also be useful.

**Comparison of leadership approaches.** A study of the differences between female and male approaches to introducing transformational leadership styles into their respective organizations is also recommended, because past research suggests that transformative leadership is based primarily on feminine characteristics. An exploration of transformational leadership introduced by a male executive is also worthy of consideration.

**Non-transformational female leaders.** Finally, the researcher would recommend examining women who elect not to use transformational leadership as their style in a male-dominated organization. If they decided to assimilate masculine characteristics and take a more male-centered leadership approach, how would this affect the organization and its culture? Would its employees take this as an affront and be insulted by this behavior? Would they not consider those women to be true leaders, and acknowledge the quality of their performance?

### **Implications for the Practice of Public Administration**

**Value-driven leadership innovation.** This research calls for a reexamination of the current transactional approaches that have been established within public sector organizations. A more transformational approach would enable such organizations to not only improve the productivity of their subordinates but also decrease the likelihood of a stagnant organization, thereby allowing for more innovative as well as sustainable leadership.

The narratives demonstrated that transformational leadership not only improved cultural influences but also increased staff performance levels by enabling subordinates to contribute and buy in to the leadership process. This innovative method improved productivity through more collaborative leadership approaches that were more value-driven, motivating subordinates to perform more efficiently, which lent stronger support to the organization's goals and values. In turn, subordinate participation decentralized the organization by moving it away from the hierarchical approaches established prior to a participant's advancement to executive leadership.

**New leadership forms to counter old norms.** The research also shows the value women in nontraditional roles can bring to their organizations by effecting organizational and cultural change in new ways. Each participant brought elements of leadership that drew away from top-down transactional norms developed under male leadership. Both past literature and the study's

narratives revealed women's tendencies to stray from male-dominated organizations and/or traditionally 'male' educational interests (i.e. math and/or sciences) due to structural as well as social standards set within these positions.

**Policy and regulation changes.** This research also brings to light the changes needing consideration when implementing hiring practices. The key to establishing a diverse workgroup and/or culture is to explore the areas in which the policies and regulations are broken within the system and to try to correct those issues. In light of the government's current hiring system that limits the ability for women and/or persons of color to enter into a seemingly homogenous work environment (predominantly white and male), this study's narratives stress the need to form a more diverse workplace culture, in addition to lessening the gender gap, by presenting opportunities for women and/or persons of color to be successful within nontraditional roles.

**Best practices.** The practice of public administration can also use this research as a best practices model in exploring cultural influences within public-sector organizations. When doing this exploration, the importance of leadership in effecting those influences must be emphasized as essential to building a skilled workforce, as well as motivating employees to support the organization's goals. Positive cultural influences not only engage the leader to be more effective, but also encourage the subordinates to perform better and to want to be part of the organization.

**Challenges to gender stereotypes.** Public administration can also benefit from this research as a refutation of sexual stereotyping in past literature, which either required women to be "manly" in their leadership approach or deemed them unfit for leadership in traditional male roles because their characteristics were too "feminine," which was a "weakness." This researcher established that a woman can be both feminine and a strong leader in her own right without needing to be an "alpha" or to possess "male" attributes or characteristics.



**Fresh approaches to leadership.** Although the placement of women in non-traditional roles need not be mandatory, it establishes a new style of leadership that refreshes the way public-sector organizations approach their missions and goals. Inviting a stronger culture of diversity when establishing organizational change also builds on the motivation of its subordinates to perform effectively within that organization. Leadership is the key to establishing a strong and stable organization, but the participation of its subordinates is just as essential to the organization's success. The women who stepped into these executive roles exemplified what transformational leadership can do for and to an organization. They emphasized through their experiences that they could turn a top-down transactional atmosphere into an organization in which the employee had a voice in its process.

**Leading the mission.** Yet these women's impacts on their organizations did not come easily to them. First, they had to "pay their dues," starting from a place where they had to become comfortable with the organization's goals, values and mission and to live that mission. From there, they could embrace the responsibility to help their organization accomplish its goals more efficiently through their transformational leadership, within the parameters of the core mission. Keys to their success in this were: (1) the reciprocally supportive relationships they established with their subordinates, which gave the latter a voice, too; (2) acknowledgment of a gap within the organization without letting it define the success they wanted to build; and (3) refusing to let a male counterpart's derogatory comments and/or averse actions diminish their focus on the overall goals and values of their organization or abilities to take the lead in accomplishing those goals and upholding those values.

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