

DISSERTATION

WOMEN WHO SUPERVISE WOMEN: THE EXPERIENCE OF WOMEN LEADERS
IN HIGHER EDUCATION

Submitted by

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In partial fulfillment of the requirements

For the Degree of Doctor of Philosophy

Colorado State University

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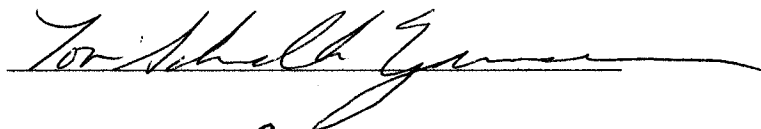
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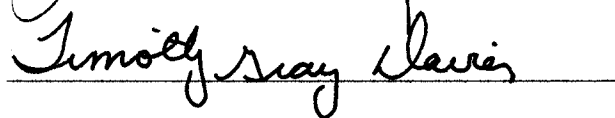
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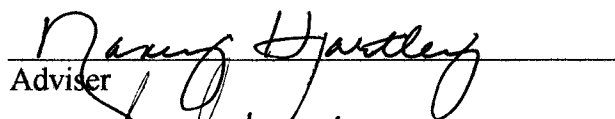
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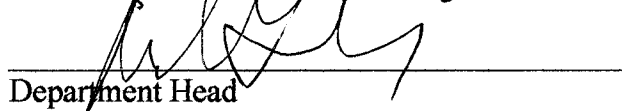
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ABSTRACT OF DISSERTATION

WOMEN WHO SUPERVISE WOMEN: THE EXPERIENCE OF WOMEN LEADERS IN HIGHER EDUCATION

The purpose of this study was to discover what it is like for women leaders in higher education to supervise women. While some research has been directed toward women leaders in higher education, limited research has focused on the phenomenon of what their experience has been like in supervising other women.

This study included a qualitative research design in the phenomenological tradition. Eight women leaders from higher education institutions, including community colleges and universities were interviewed.

Two sets of themes were identified in this study. The first set of three “context” themes included women’s leadership, supervision, and women can be hard on women. These three context themes contributed to understanding who the participants were as women leaders. The second set of five “essence” themes included female subordinates are capable and work hard; supervising females is both positive and negative; relationships with female subordinates is flexible, informal, critical, and complicated; conflict with females is difficult and time consuming; and differences between

supervising support staff and professional staff. These five essence themes answered the primary research question, "What is it like to supervise women?"

For the women leaders in this study, relationships with others were a key element in all the themes. Relationships with female subordinates, while sometimes challenging, were positive overall. The leaders noted differences between supervising support staff and professional level staff.

Based on the findings in this study, additional research on women and conflict with women is needed. Further examination of the unique experience of supervising female support staff is also warranted.

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DEDICATION

This dissertation is dedicated in memory of Miriam Landis Cohen
(1930-1987)

Miriam was an extraordinary woman who knew a great deal about supervising women. She gave me my first job, helped to build my self-esteem, and provided me with a strong female role model early in life. She also inspired me to become a “career woman,” and I will be forever grateful for the opportunity, guidance, and love she gave to me.

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I feel so fortunate to have had such tremendous support from colleagues, friends, and family as I have pursued my doctoral studies. I am particularly grateful to the 8 women leaders who gave me their time but, most importantly, offered me their thoughts and feelings about their experience in supervising women. I have loved hearing their stories and feel enriched by the exposure to their wisdom.

My dissertation committee was terrific in supporting my desire to pursue a study that would honor the qualitative tradition. When I first met Dr. Tim Davies, he closed our meeting with an incredibly accurate prediction. Even before I completed my first course, he predicted that I would end up pursuing a study involving women, leaders, and conflict. Little did I know, that one of the themes that would emerge in my study related to just that ... women leaders and conflict. I thank Tim for his gentle, kind hand in crafting a very successful graduate program and for sticking with me as I moved in and out of sight during the past six and a half years. He has been the light I have needed to move through this graduate program and I am certain he knows what I mean by that. Dr. Toni Zimmerman has been enthusiastic from the beginning about my study. As an accomplished qualitative researcher I particularly appreciated her support and insight as I moved through the proposal and defense process. Dr. Jim Banning has been my teacher,

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I would like to thank my friends and family who each in their unique way supported me through my coursework and dissertation writing process. Thanks go to friends Vicki Baier, Rick Donnley, Connie Forbis Jennings, Tami Hecker, Dorothy Hull, Sandy Littlefield, Janice Mason, Pam McElwee, and Tom and Marlene Norman for checking in on me and helping me to see the light at the end of the tunnel. And finally, to my dear family who have encouraged me through this graduate program. My deepest love and gratitude go to my parents, Dee and Ed Hobson, for their unconditional love and incredible trust in my abilities. My mother and father-in-law, Pete and Marie Panico, have cheered me on and I am so thankful for their kind support and prayers. Finally, I am most grateful of all for my husband, Paul, and sons, Ben and Nick, for urging me to get my dissertation finished and for the many sacrifices they endured as I moved through the graduate coursework and dissertation writing process. I could not have completed this without them.

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CHAPTER I: INTRODUCTION

Problem Statement and Context

As the number of women leaders in business and education continues to grow, so do the examples of non-traditional leadership (Clemons, 1998; Duff & Cohen, 1993; Guido-DiBrito, Noteboom, Nathan, & Fenty, 1996; Rosener, 1990; Walsh, 1998). Women are making their way into top-level positions, not only by using skills that have been successful for men, but by also using skills gleaned from their shared experience as women (Cox, 1996; Helgeson, 1990; Rosener, 1990).

Many of these skills, as demonstrated by a combination of women's traits and behaviors, may be deemed as typically "feminine" and therefore previously thought of as inappropriate for senior leaders who hold powerful positions within organizations including colleges and universities. These "feminine" skills often include encouraging participation from all ranks of the organization, sharing information openly, cooperating with others, using intuitive problem solving, enhancing other's self-worth, and being sensitive and caring towards others (Clark, Carafella, & Ingram, 1998; Helgeson, 1990; Irby & Brown, 1995; Loden, 1985; Tannen, 1990). A number of studies have been conducted whereby women leaders frequently make reference to their use of shared power and participatory management (Brunner, 1999; Jablonski, 1996; Rosener, 1990). In an important study of women community college presidents, Gillett-Karam (1988)

analyzed the feminine factors of leadership. She found that the women in her study were more likely to take risks, a concept highly connected to having vision (Bennis & Nanus, 1985). She also found that caring and respect for others was a significant factor for the women leaders in her study. Additionally, she found that women displayed greater strength than did men around the variable of acting collaboratively. She also found that women demonstrated greater openness and trust in their personal and professional behavior than did men. While some male leaders are labeled as uncaring and task oriented, sometimes female leaders are viewed as weak, unproductive, and incapable of making important organizational decisions (Guido-DiBrito, et al., 1996). Interestingly, studies of women leaders continue to point to the use of “feminine” skills as essential to their style (Cox, 1996; Jablonski, 1996). In one study, women who described themselves as predominantly “feminine” or “gender-neutral” reported a higher level of female followership among their female subordinates than women who describe themselves as “masculine” (Rosener, 1990).

Helgeson (1990, 1995) describes women leaders as those who prefer to form flat organizations, and whose leadership is characterized by frequent contacts with staff members. She further postulates that the integration of female values into leadership creates a web of inclusion, a circular system interconnected by an exchange of power and information. According to Tannen (1990), women see the world as a network of connections in which support and consensus are sought and confirmed.

In a meta-analytic study of evaluations of male and female business leaders, respondents favored female leaders over male leaders as reported by male subordinates but female subordinates favored male leaders over female leaders (Eagly, Makhijani, &

Klonsky, 1992). Johnson (1998) revealed that although women leaders view their own style as participatory, their subordinates' perceptions differed.

This difference in perception of how leaders are viewed by subordinates raises the question of whether female subordinates expect female leaders to exhibit more feminine-like traits, such as personal interaction and web-like inclusion, than a man would in a similar position. If women leaders do demonstrate typical female traits, does this make the leader seem less effective to others, especially their female subordinates? While there is sufficient literature about women's ways of leading (transformational, interactive, and participatory leadership), little has been written about how these specific leadership styles impact female subordinates. What happens when women supervise women? Does the possession of power, held by supervisors, impact the way women relate to one another? Does the use of certain leadership skills typically associated with "feminine" and "masculine" styles have an effect on the supervision of female subordinates? Little research has been published to answer these questions (Bartol, 1974; Bourantes & Papalexandris, 1990; Petty & Bruning, 1980; Ragins, 1991; Watson, 1988).

Purpose

The purpose of this phenomenological study will be to develop an understanding of the experience of women leaders in higher education with regard to supervision of female subordinates. Interviews with women leaders in higher education will be conducted to explore this phenomenon. This study will involve women leaders holding line positions with the rank of dean, vice president, assistant vice president, vice chancellor, provost, or chancellor/president of a college, university, or community

college. Line position leaders were selected because, by definition, people in these positions have many subordinates who report to them. The focus of the interviews with leaders will be on their perceptions of supervising female subordinates and not on the perceptions of the subordinates. Subordinates are considered those women who report directly to the leader. Such positions might include assistant dean, assistant to, special assistant, director, and department chair. Interviews will be carried out with women leaders from a sample of higher education institutions within Colorado. Colorado was chosen because of the proximity of the researcher and the availability of women leaders. A phenomenological description of themes from the interviews will be provided.

Research Question

It is essential to learn more about women's experiences as supervisors of females from their own voices. Thus, this study proposes a phenomenological exploration of the following research question: How do women in higher educational leadership positions view the experience of supervising female subordinates?

Creswell (1998) describes the phenomenological study as one that describes the meaning of the lived human experiences of a specific phenomenon. This study proposes to allow the women's voices to describe their experience and to search for and describe the evolving essence of that experience.

Definitions of Terms

The following terms are defined so that readers can understand the context in which the terms are being used in this study.

Supervisor refers to women who have line authority over other employees.

Subordinate is the term used to describe a person supervised by the supervisor.

*Leadership/leader is defined, for this study as “an influential relationship between leaders and followers who intend real changes that reflect their mutual purposes” (Rost, 1991).

Gender refers to the historical, social, and cultural construction of biological sex (Klenke, 1996).

Follower is a term used in the literature to describe subordinate.

Feminine is used to describe traditional female-like traits and behaviors; attributes ascribed to women without their active involvement (Regan & Brooks, 1995).

Feminist refers to attributes actively defined and claimed by women themselves (Regan & Brooks, 1995).

Masculine is used to describe traditional male-like traits and behaviors.

Power is a term used to describe possession of authority or influence over other people or things.

Higher education refers to institutions offering post-secondary education such as community colleges, colleges, and universities.

Line position means one who holds a supervisory position over others.

Collaborative is the ability to work in a group, eliciting and offering support to each other, creating a synergistic environment (Regan & Brooks, 1995)

*There are many definitions of leadership within the literature, as well as, acknowledgement that there is little agreement among scholars regarding a common definition.

Delimitations

This study will focus on the experience of eight women who supervise women within public four-year and two-year higher education institutions within Colorado. It will not include the perspective of the subordinates of the leaders who are interviewed. Further, the study will focus on leaders who hold line positions within their institutions.

Limitations and Assumptions

Interviews for this study include women who hold positions at the dean, vice chancellor, vice president, assistant vice president, provost, chancellor, or presidential levels in institutions of higher education within Colorado. These levels will vary among the interviewees. No attempt has been made to determine the quality of their leadership as perceived by colleagues, subordinates, supervisors, or the general public. Subordinates of the leaders interviewed hold positions that vary in level and importance to the individual, institution and to each other, which may impact the experiences of their supervisors. The researcher assumed that those interviewed were being as open and honest as possible in their responses. Because this study included only women from eight higher education institutions within one state, it is not expected that findings from the study are generalizable to women in higher education throughout the country.

Significance of the Study

The number of women leaders in colleges and universities still pales in comparison to the number of male leaders in higher education (Wenniger & Conroy, 2001). Women who do rise to such positions are under tremendous pressure to succeed in

what continues to be a male dominated environment. All higher education leaders need to be visionary strategic planners while leading with integrity and openness. Part of the responsibility of successful leaders is to listen, nurture, and mentor followers. Positive, productive, relationships with subordinates are crucial to the success of academic leaders. While many female subordinates in academia have worked for male leaders, the experience of being supervised by a women leader is still relatively new. A better understanding of how women leaders are experiencing the exercise of power over other women is important. Understanding what makes female supervisory relationships work could enhance the overall success of women leaders.

Gender and leadership appears to be a growing aspect of the overall leadership literature available today. The literature on feminine leadership traits and behaviors would seem to indicate that women have many of the skills needed for today's leadership demands. However, the literature has not focused very much on how subordinates respond to women using such skills in the workplace. Further, there appears to be little work in the area of how females respond to women leaders or on what it is like for women to supervise other women. This qualitative study will help women leaders who wish to have a better understanding of the supervision of female subordinates particularly within the setting of higher education.

Investigator's Perspective

I have been involved in the profession of higher education administration (line positions) for the past 22 years. My work has been focused primarily at four-year institutions (one in the east and two in the west) with recent experience as director of a community college annex. I served for ten years as ombudsman at two separate higher

education institutions where I supervised others and observed and mediated numerous supervisor/supervisee relationship conflicts. My work experience has also included three key leadership positions including Director of Business Services in a community college, and Interim Vice Chancellor for Student Affairs at a flagship university, and Assistant Vice President for Academic Affairs and Human Resources for a university system. I have participated in community leadership development programs and have attended an intensive residential leadership development institute at a major university in the east.

In my leadership positions I supervised numerous women at the director level and below. I have been supervised by a female vice chancellor and worked very closely with a women president of a major research institution within the United States. I have been surprised by and unprepared for the way in which female subordinates reacted to my role as leader and supervisor and likewise, have been confused by the treatment I have received from female supervisors. These experiences have led to my desire to learn more about women who supervise women.

I recognize my own use of what the literature has called feminine leadership skills. These include efforts at inclusiveness, freely sharing information with others, caring about others, valuing relationships, and employing participatory management and decision-making. However, I prefer to think of myself as having and using a feminist perspective in my work, which includes, but is not limited to, the empowerment of others and the seeking of fair and equal treatment for those with whom I work.

Valuing and advocating for diversity has been a major emphasis in my work in higher education. While much of my work has been with students, faculty, and staff of color, I have also spent time on collective women's issues within the academy. These

issues include sexual harassment, promotion and tenure of women, training female student leaders, supporting women's programming, and analyzing the impact of compensation policies on female faculty and staff. Spending personal and professional time mentoring female professionals and students has always been one of my highest priorities.

CHAPTER II: LITERATURE REVIEW

The following review of literature is comprised of major topic areas, including women in higher education administration, women university and community college presidents, leadership and gender, leadership styles, feminine and feminist leadership, power, gender and leadership and supervisor/subordinate relationships. Each major topic area is followed by a review of the literature and an analysis of any relationships of the literature to the particular research question being examined in the study.

Women in Higher Education Administration

The role of women in higher education administration became an important area of study in the last two decades of the 20th century. During this time period, more women than ever moved into significant leadership roles within higher education institutions. Female administrators are faced with shaping women's roles in organizations that have a very traditional and masculine cultural ethos (Eggins, 1997). Both barriers to and success for women in administration are explored in the research literature.

In the decade 1984-94 the number of senior women administrators (presidents, vice-presidents, and deans) doubled. Today, women hold 16 percent of chief executive positions within U.S. colleges/community colleges and universities. A decade ago women held 10 percent and two decades ago only 5 percent of the chief executive

positions within higher education (American Council on Education, 1994). The most recent figures show a total of 453 chief executive officers leading higher education institutions. Of these 237 are private, with 199 leading four-year institutions and 38 leading two-year institutions. The remarkable growth has been in the public sector, where from a base of 11 female leaders in 1975 there are now 138 female leaders in two-year community colleges, and from an even weaker base of 5 female leaders in 1975, there are now 78 female leaders in four-year universities and colleges. The community college has the highest percentage of female presidents than any other institution type with ten-to-twenty percent female (Getskow, 1996; Townsend, 1995). Although the number of women in administrative positions within higher education has increased in recent decades, obstacles remain for those interested in reaching the highest ranks within the academy.

There is debate as to why women are not hired as readily as men for the role of college president. Leatherman (1991) speculated that these women have had less opportunity for the “plum leadership jobs” and either end up taking on the presidency of a troubled institution or be offered nothing at all. As to why community colleges seem more prone to hire women in their chief officer position, DiCroce (1995) postulated that community colleges value access, diversity, and inclusiveness, therefore, they are more apt to welcome women into the highest ranks. From a more cynical perspective, she wondered if the steadily rising number of women presidents in the community college is attributable to the institution’s lower hierarchical status within academe.

In a study of 100 women in line positions within the Illinois public and private higher education system, it was concluded that women were significantly

underrepresented in the top-level positions such as president, vice president, and dean. Fifty percent felt that their salaries were not comparable to their male counterparts and that they did not advance as rapidly as their male counterparts (Meyer, 1982). In an effort to assess changes in positions of females over a 5-year period in academic and administrative hierarchy, Twale (1992) compared internal/external hiring's, public/private universities, and emerging career pathways for women. She found that, between 1986 and 1991, the numbers of female appointments increased but the hiring patterns shifted from the public to the private institutions. Internal hires were more common in 1991 than they were in 1986 and women were predominantly in the director level positions -- those often thought of as outside the policy making academic hierarchy. To better understand the impact of gender on promotion within the university setting, status, responsibility and salary were studied. Findings indicated that gender has a substantial negative impact on women's attainment of promotions and the impact increases over time (Johnsrud, 1994; North, 1991). Glazer-Ramo (1999) went so far as to say that women's equality in higher education is a myth. She found that although there has been significant advances in women's employment in higher education since the 1970s that women academic leaders including senior faculty, department chairs, deans, and administrators all fall behind male peers in professional status, including rank, salary, tenure, job satisfaction, and working conditions. More recently, McKenney (2002) examined the career paths and mobility factors of women chief academic officers in public community colleges. Analysis of the role of gender on the career path, entry port, first prior position held, number of positions held, or number of years in faculty and administrative positions found no difference between males and females. However, she

did find that women served in their positions for significantly less time than their male peers and that women are younger and moving faster through their career paths than their male peers.

Schmidt (1992) examined literature relating to the reasons for under representation of women in education administration. She found that the circular phenomenon, in which the lack of female role models, contributes to fewer female applicants and discrimination. Her study found that women possess the skills needed for effective administrative leadership yet they continue to be underrepresented in key leadership positions. Glazer-Raymo (1999) listed challenges to affirmative action, the corporatization of the university, and the increase in the number of non-tenure track positions as factors contributing to the inequality between male and female academic leaders in higher education.

Many other issues have been explored in an effort to better understand the career advancement of women in higher education leadership positions including career patterns, key internal/external factors contributing to their leadership potential, role models, mentors, physical attractiveness, stress, role ambiguity, organizational commitment and the structure of power relationships vis-à-vis gender (Blackhurst, Brandt, & Kalinowski, 1998; Grover, 1992; Hickson, 1993; Lesmeister, 1996). Morrissey (1997) examined the factors that benefited and inhibited advancement of females in higher education administration. She found that professional development programs, mentors, networking, supportive campus environment, strong educational background, self-confidence, and understanding higher education positively influence career advancement. Furthermore, she found that having to juggle professional obligations with

family, the perceived old boys' network, lack of opportunities for advancement, ill defined career paths for women, gender discrimination, and working in an unfavorable campus climate hinder advancement of women. For African-American chief administrative officers, the ability to work collaboratively with faculty, staff, students, community members, elected officials, governing bodies, faculty senate chairs and student government leaders was connected to their career advancement (Meisenheimer-Hunter, 1998).

Of great interest in the literature on women in higher education administration is exploring the various dimensions of what makes women successful. Albino (1992) found four work behaviors and attitudes of successful women college administrators: a strong sense of self, working hard and setting priorities, interpersonal skills (listening and mediating), and the ability to use strategy. Success for diverse women leaders has also been explored. For Native-American women educational leaders, a commitment to serving the community, emergence and claiming of one's native voice, education as a key to cultural survival and self-determination, traveling across boundaries, and being in touch with the spirit and soul of their native leadership were keys to their success Johnson (1997). For African-American women, data showed that factors instrumental to their success included perseverance, self-development, discipline, impeccable interpersonal skills, over preparedness, collective sisterhood, working collaboratively with faculty, staff and students, healthy paranoia, cultural role models, organizational savvy, and problem solving abilities (Gray, 1997; Meisenheimer-Hunter, 1998). Strength for African-American women leaders in community colleges was derived from early signs of leadership, strong spiritual beliefs, close relationships with their mothers, and

valuing their aloneness as well as their support systems (Robinson,1996). Gupton and Slick (1996) surveyed 151 higher education administrators and completed in-depth interviews with 15 about advice most often given by women to other aspiring female administrators about career achievement and leadership. The administrators indicated that successful women need to be prepared, persevere, plan for your career, be diligent and professional, honor others, preserve and protect your integrity, reach out to others, practice what you seek, and lead by example.

In the related area of school administration, women superintendents found that balancing role and gender related expectations, communicating effectively in a masculinized culture, incorporating traditional feminine behaviors into their administrative role, balancing courage with relaxation, and sharing power and credit with others were ways for them to achieve success (Brunner, 1997).

Barriers facing women in achieving academic leadership positions in community colleges and universities have been studied. Findings indicated that women experience a significant number of both internal and organizational barriers to their professional performance including, unequal balance of work/home interface, lack of mobility, excessive stress, and gender bias (Sekine, 1994; Wheeler, 1997). They also perceived barriers to their female colleagues' professional performance to an even greater extent than their own. Minorities, married women, women who were less than 50 years of age, and women with lower salaries were more likely to report higher levels of barriers. Rotte (1991) argued that a lack of collegiality among women administrators is part of the problem for women who wish to change campus administration from within. She

suggested that women work collectively with the power base established by the long-standing male administration.

The relationship between job satisfaction and organizational climate for 186 women higher education administrators at five U.S. institutions was studied. Results indicate that women reported dissatisfaction with 14 important climate dimensions. Those dimensions with the highest dissatisfaction included conflict management, reward system, equity, commitment/morale, and planning/decision-making (Dutka, 2002).

Nelson (1996) studied the meaning of “feminist” administration for women leaders in higher education. In a qualitative study, six feminist women leaders were interviewed about what it was like to be a feminist administrator in the University of Wisconsin System. Results revealed seven themes including feminist identity, pride and power, strategy, autonomy, discrimination, culture of place and fullness of midlife. All participants agreed that a feminist style of administration was effective, philosophically congruent and easier at higher levels. One of the most interesting findings in this study was that most participants noted negative views of men and women toward feminist, equitable, participative leadership. A case study of a woman chief finance officer in higher education found the participant to have a feminist leadership ethos. The participant’s administrative leadership was characterized by a human resource orientation rather than a strictly financial, efficiency-driven focus (Soroko, 1997).

In summary, although women are still a minority, more women are moving into leadership positions in higher education. Males have historically held the chief leadership positions in higher education (95 percent in 1975 and 81 percent in 1998), thus today women are managing and leading in a male cultural ethos (Wenniger & Conroy, 2001).

Women continue to be underrepresented in the roles of president, vice president, dean, and department head within the academy. However, within community colleges, women fare better at the top leadership positions. Many factors have been found to contribute to the lack of women leaders in higher education including lack of female role models, challenges to affirmative action, increase in the number of non-tenure track positions, juggling family and professional obligations, predominant male ethos, a chilly climate for women on campus, and gender discrimination. Conversely, much research has been focused on the factors associated with women's success. These include mentors, support networks, campus support for diversity, strong sense of self, strong educational background, and interpersonal skills. Women of diverse backgrounds had additional components that contribute to their success.

Women University and Community College Presidents

Although little has been written on the college presidency as experienced by women presidents, the available literature clearly reflects the experience as unique for those having achieved this level. Most of the available research has been conducted on community college presidents, perhaps in part because they are more abundant than female university presidents or more willing to be studied. Much like the research on women administrators, researchers take note of both the obstacles for women and what makes them successful.

Brooker (1998) examined the significant developmental experiences of 5 pioneering women executives in higher education. This qualitative study focused on events that occurred in their presidencies and illuminated the lessons learned from them.

Four key events were found to be common among the women in the study: bosses, assignments, successes, and difficult times. Unique to Brookers' findings was that women in her study recounted early experiences of 'awakening' with mentors who envisioned them as future leaders. Cooper (1992) studied the perceived characteristics and life events that enabled four women to become university presidents. Several themes arose in her study including the impact of their early years at home with parents and family; their college and university experience; marriage and family relationships; career paths; role models and mentors; the development of a sense of self and values; their leadership style; discrimination they encountered; and their strategies for success. It was found that the greatest factors influencing these women were the result of strong family support, educational nurturing, the development of self-confidence and self-esteem, and the resilience to succeed despite impediments they encountered as adults.

In a case study of one college president, Sawyer (1996) explored the conception of leadership for a first-time president. Data were collected from the president as well as 11 of her colleagues. The president saw herself as a participatory leader who, at times, felt her leadership style hampered by her fiduciary duties. The president also viewed herself as distinct from male leaders given her exceptional interpersonal skills and less aggressive, forceful nature. Her associates welcomed the contrast from previous male presidents. The perceptions revealed in this study demonstrate implicit gender bias in assumptions about effective leadership. In an interesting twist on perceptions of the university presidency, Johnson (1993) studied the expectations and interpretations of presidential leadership in a research university by male and female faculty.

Interestingly, women lead ten of the 28 member colleges of the American Indian Higher Education Consortium. Two studies examined the experience of Native-American college presidents. One study of 4 women suggested that the most important aspect of their leadership was providing direction and articulating a clear mission for the colleges (Krumm, 1997). In the other study, the need for leaders to be balanced was a major finding (Ambler, 1992).

Many of the studies regarding community college presidents are focused on the role that gender plays in their leadership style and subsequent success. For example, Thomas (1993) conducted a study to determine whether gender affects the acceptance of a positional leader, such as a community college president, and the perception of his/her effectiveness as a leader. This qualitative study involved 5 males and 5 females with 11 colleagues interviewed at each president's institution. Findings revealed that because of gender stereotypes, there is a difference in the expectations of male and female presidents when they are first appointed. After the president had been in the position for a while other considerations such as ability and skills became more prominent. Participants in the study supported the stereotype that women are not able to make strong and independent decisions and that they are more likely to base their decisions on emotions rather than logic. Women respondents in the study felt that errors and weaknesses were more readily tolerated in male than in female presidents.

Gillett-Karam (1988) conducted a secondary data analysis on data originally gathered by Roueche, Baker, and Rose (1989) to determine whether gender was a critical variable in transformational leadership behavior of community college presidents. Key findings of the study included the fact that women presidents assumed their first

administrative career position six years later than did males in the study. On average, women in the study were 38 years old and men were 28. They also found that women assumed their first presidency at the average age of 43, seven years older than their male counterparts. The vast majority of mothers of the female presidents were more highly educated than their fathers. Women spent more hours at work, per week, than did the men. Women spent 25 percent more time consulting, conferring, and networking with faculty than did men. Findings also indicated that no statistically significant differences were found in the area of leadership skills. Both males and females in the study powerfully addressed the concept of vision. Women demonstrated significantly higher risk-taking, caring, and respect for individual differences and collaborating and building openness and trust with others. Men demonstrated significantly higher rewarding of others contingent on their performance and effort and had a bias for action.

In 1998 and 1999 the American Council on Education held a series of 13 roundtables around the United States to learn about the status and experience of women college presidents. The roundtables focused on five areas: working with boards, special challenges and opportunities posed by the gender factor, staying power, identifying and mentoring talented women for presidencies, and creating a climate for success. In a summary publication Brown, Van Ummersen, and Sturnick (2001) reported that consistent themes emerged from the discussions among the college presidents. One of those themes included the fact that not all presidencies are alike, and there is indeed a gender factor, especially in the complications posed by the personal lives of women presidents. Additionally they found that mentoring and being mentored have special implications for women in the college presidency. Achieving balance between

professional and personal lives was considered one of the keys to success among women participants in the study.

Common challenges faced by women presidents were another area explored in the research. Monosoff (2000) found four themes along with sub themes in her qualitative study of 14 women college presidents. They included leadership (playing the game, gender power issues, and tough decisions), family (balancing rigors of work with family, having children, and influence from parents), higher education (courses or programs that may have better served them and influence of mentors and role models), and success (career planning, characteristics of a good leader today, and what women bring to the table). The study also revealed two unexpected discoveries. First, was the fact that the women did not feel comfortable calling themselves leaders even though they had reached a high level of influence, and second, was that women's power was obstructed or challenged not only by men but also by women.

A number of themes were found in the literature regarding the college presidency. Key events in women presidents' lives included experiences with bosses, critical assignments, and lessons learned from successes and difficult times. It was noted that female presidents identified awakening experiences with mentors as a factor in seeing themselves as potential significant leaders. Strong family support and development of strong self-esteem and self-confidence were common among the women presidents. Subordinate's expectations differ for male and female presidents. Both male and female presidents share the value of visioning on behalf of the organization. Women presidents work hard and like other female administrators struggle with the balance between family and work.

Leadership and Gender

Leadership has been formally defined in terms of traits, behaviors, influence, styles, authority, goal achievement, management, and transformation (Klenke, 1996). The variations on the definitions of leadership are virtually endless and there is widespread disagreement about the meaning of leadership.

Decades of academic analysis have given up more than 850 definitions of leadership. Literally thousands of empirical investigations of leaders have been conducted in the last 75 years alone, but no clear and unequivocal understanding exists as to what distinguishes leaders from non-leaders and, perhaps more important, what distinguishes effective leaders from ineffective leaders and effective organizations from ineffective organizations. Bennis and Nanus (1997, p.4).

A common belief among researchers of leadership is that, until the last few decades, much of the research about leadership has been about male leaders described by male researchers (Adler, 1999; Klenke, 1996; Powell, 1993). Rost (1991) analyzed 221 definitions of leadership found in books, book chapters, and journal articles written between 1900 and 1990 and concluded that the leadership definitions he reviewed assumed that leadership is rational, management-oriented, male, technocratic, quantitative, cost-driven, hierarchical, short-term, pragmatic, and materialistic. His view is that at the beginning of the 1990's we have "old wine in new bottles". He postulates that contemporary terms describing leadership as excellence, charisma, culture, quality, vision, peak performance and empowerment are simply new takes on the old great man/woman approach with similar trait, group, organization, and management definitions and theories.

Traditionally, women have been viewed as lacking the traits and behaviors considered prerequisites for effective leadership. These include such traits as aggression,

competitiveness, dominance, Machiavellianism, ambition, and decisiveness. In Hartman's book, *Talking Leadership* (1999), she commented on what happened when researchers discovered women as subjects for research associated with leadership. She postulated that rather than researchers asking what was wrong with leadership that so few women were singled out as leaders, instead the focus was on what was wrong with women that they had not achieved more leadership positions. And the explanation she found in her own study was that certain rooted female behaviors are antithetical to successful leadership. These types of findings, she believes, forced women into a "being more like a man" approach to leadership.

Since the 1970s, much of the leadership research has focused on gaining an understanding of the differences between male and female leaders. Some of the first studies conducted by Bartol and Butterfield (1976) found that "high-consideration" females were evaluated more favorably than their male counterparts. They went on to discover that males who attempted to use more "consideration" and females who used more "structuring" (usually associated with males) were found to be viewed as less effective. In a similar study, Jago and Vroom (1982) found that women who were more autocratic and less participatory were evaluated less favorably. This finding was supported by Watson's (1988) study when she directly tested the "women should be more like a man approach" to leadership. In her study she encouraged female subjects in structured supervisor/subordinate encounters to consciously adopt a dominant stereotypically male leadership style. Those who did so were actually viewed by males and females as less effective than those who had adopted a more considerate, problem-solving, stereotypically female style.

Other research has also looked at the difference between male and female leaders. In a study conducted by the Center for Creative Leadership it was found that in order for women to approach the highest levels, they are expected to have more strengths and fewer faults than their male counterparts (Morrison, White, & VanVelsor, 1992). In Swiss's (1996) study of 325 women executives, 68 percent believed that they were being held to a higher standard than their male counterparts. Other researchers have found that little or no difference exists between genders (Adams, Rice, & Instone, 1984; Day & Stogdill, 1972).

The 20th century was filled with emerging theories of leadership. The notion that leaders are born, not made best describes the popularity of trait theory. The trait theory is based on the concept of admirable traits of "great men" (Stogdill, 1981). Trait theories include the assessment of physical features (height, weight, age, physique), individual abilities (intelligence, speech, knowledge), and personality characteristics (dominance, self-confidence, control).

Behavior theories, those that examine the actions and styles of leaders, were popular in the middle of the 20th century (Middlehurst, 1997). Behavior theories focus on the relationships and interactions between leaders and others and also focus on task achievement and task structuring. Notable leadership behavior research was accomplished by Blake and Mouton (1964) when they explored tasks and relationships and Hersey and Blanchard (1969) who described the two-dimensional leadership concepts of concern for task and concern for people. It is in this area of behavior theories that gender differences have been explored by (Eagly & Johnson, 1990). Some of these studies have demonstrated that the socialization of males and females is culturally

transmitted with acceptable role expectations related to leadership for each (Adler & Israeli, 1988). Studies confirm that both men and women are evaluated less favorably when their behavior is gender incongruent than when it is gender congruent (Schein, 1975).

Situational or contingency theories regarding leadership have also been developed and researched. Contingencies that impact leadership include the nature of tasks, the type of external environment, and the capabilities of followers (Fiedler, 1967). Research on situational theories has explored the position of the leader in the hierarchy, functions performed by the organization, the characteristics and use of technology, competence of subordinates, and the presence or absence of crisis. Contingency theories are particularly relevant when examining higher education leaders due to the complexity of colleges and universities (Middlehurst, 1997).

Power and influence theories refer to the power to command, influence, and govern. A guiding theory about power is French and Raven's (1968) classification of power sources for leaders (legitimate, reward, coercive, expert, and referent power). An offshoot of power theory is the transactional or social exchange theory whereby an exchange of rewards and benefits takes place between leader and follower (Hollander, 1992). Kanter (1983) expanded on this theory by advocating that leaders can increase their power by empowering their followers. Empowering others is a common leadership quality often associated with female leaders. Feminine qualities often include nurturing, sensitivity, listening, and reaching out to others. These qualities are important to successful empowerment of others.

Cultural and symbolic theories highlight the importance of values in leadership. Leadership is envisioned as the management of meaning wherein leaders create meaning through the transformation of the organizational culture. With this approach, leaders can help develop a shared meaning for their organization that includes norms, values, philosophy, rules, and climate. The notion of culture is important for women leaders, particularly within higher education. Cultures that value interconnectedness and communication may set the stage for female leadership opportunities and success. A climate that supports dominant and controlling images and beliefs may hinder a female leader's development.

During the past 20 years a multitude of theories involving charisma and vision have been developed. These include transformational, visionary, charismatic, and inspirational leadership approaches (Bennis & Nanus, 1985). This newer approach embraces a more descriptive, naturalistic phenomenology of leaders in action (Sergiovanni & Starratt, 1993). Behaviors of leaders common to these approaches include elevating the goals of followers, sharing power with others, and encouraging followers to be leaders. Charismatic leaders tend to have a magical influence on their followers. Some researchers view the terms transformation and charismatic as interchangeable and others argue that charisma is only a part of the approach of transformational leaders (Bass, 1985). Both terms reflect a major or substantial influence over one's followers. Through his research, Burns (1978) added a crucial element to the concept of transformational leadership. He found that leaders transform followers by elevating them to higher moral ground. Previously, moral and ethical aspects of leadership had not been considered. In a case study of transformational leadership exhibited by a woman department chair in a

university, Jenkins (1996) described the chairs' leadership tools as collaboration and relationship building and of moving the discussion forward. The chair described transformational leadership as not easy, stating that it is a real challenge to nourish the dynamic nature of relational leadership (accepted by the female subordinates), as opposed to the static idea (embraced more by male subordinates) of the leader as "all-powerful", and to figure out how to encourage others to participate.

As we move into the 21st century the view of leadership is shifting from local to global. New technology is changing the way we work and markedly influencing the amount and speed of change. Increased competition in the economy is likely to require more collaborative ventures and increased networking. The skills needed for future leaders may, indeed, be both those stereotypically construed about women and genuinely expressed by women. As Sergiovanni & Starratt (1993) has advocated, in a post-modern world, we need leadership that is grounded in an understanding of the human condition as both feminine and masculine. O'Toole (1999) wrote a book on leadership that focused on appropriately ambitious leaders. In a subsequent interview about the book he commented on the challenges and achievements of women. While he stated that women leaders face different problems and challenges because social expectations tend to be different between genders, he also believed that such expectations are changing. He described an accomplished female leader who got out of her office and went into the trenches with subordinates, stretched them and let them grow. He described her as one of the best examples of how to lead people, by nurturing them while holding them accountable. This contemporary description of successful leadership clearly includes a feminine component.

During the 2000 National Association of Women in Education conference, workshop leaders Suby-Long, and Murray proclaimed that times are changing and so is the nature of leadership. Specifically they said:

As our society has evolved from an emphasis on hunting/gathering to information to relationships to spirituality, the paradigm is changing. The old paradigm of the scientific age saw progress and organizations in terms of machines. Information was power. A leader stood in front and told people what to do. That world is fading and a new one based on relationships is taking place. Leading from trust rather than position, the new leader steps back to assess. Women have done this for centuries. It's deep within our DNA (Suby-Long & Murray, 2000).

In summary, there are a multitude of definitions of leadership. Historically, much of the leadership research and literature has been based on males and reflects such leadership concepts as rational, reward-contingent, quantitative, and hierarchical. Some women have traditionally been viewed as lacking male leadership traits such as aggressiveness, organization, ambition, and decisiveness. However, some contemporary theorists do not believe women lack the traits necessary to be successful leaders. In fact, recent efforts to explore and understand women's leadership reveal that women possess many necessary traits to successful leadership in today's business and higher education culture. The 20th century was filled with abundant leadership theories including trait theories, behavior theories, situational or contingency theories, power and influence theories; more recently cultural, symbolic, charismatic, and visionary theories have emerged. Transformational or relational leadership theories are enjoying contemporary focus. As we move into the 21st century, transformational or relational theories are favorable for women. With the focus on technology and the abundance of readily accessible information, we need leadership that is grounded in understanding of the human condition. This is a quality that women have long held.

Leadership Styles and Gender

One of the most popular areas being studied in the leadership literature during the late 1980s and throughout the 1990s is leadership styles. Some studies simply identified leadership styles of women leaders while others examined the relationship between styles and other phenomenon. A few studies looked at diversity and gender, such as Asian and African-American women in relation to their leadership styles.

Jablonski (1992) focused on the leadership styles of 7 women college presidents and what their faculties perceived the styles of each to be. She found that the presidents described themselves as generative leaders. Jablonski's definition of the generative leadership style included empowerment, collaboration, communication, decision-making, and feminism. Based on a humanistic perspective of leadership, generative leadership has at its core fostering productivity and creativity in others. In contrast to the presidents, the faculty, in general, described their presidents in terms associated with the traditional male leadership models. Only 2 of the 7 were seen as true generative leaders. Factors influencing faculty perceptions included the focus on budget issues, personnel decisions, and the balance of the external/internal role of the president. Other factors, which appeared to contribute to the dissonance, included faculty governance, gender stereotypes, and higher expectations of women presidents.

Griffin (1992) compared perceptions about male and female business managers who used either an authoritarian or participative leadership style. Findings included a significant interaction of the manager's gender and leadership style on the ratings of ten personality characteristics. Males were rated more positively when they were authoritative and females more positively when they were participative. Analysis

indicated that subjects would rather not work for authoritative women and preferred to work for males rather than females. Green (1998) documented the leadership styles of 30 women leaders in higher education. Findings indicated that 93 percent of the women demonstrated a strong preference for a democratic style of leadership with over half of the women referring to the value of teams. They most often described themselves as facilitators with the ability to recognize and coordinate the talents of team members. In a related study, Savery (1991) found that female subordinates desired a more democratic style of leadership than men.

Ramsey (1998) explored the leadership styles of African-American community college women administrators and found no dominant leadership style. The findings did reveal a significant relationship between the administrator's religious and spiritual experiences in childhood and their leadership style. Ideta (1996) looked at Asian women and their tales of self-discovery. Themes that emerged from her study included the women's ability to become stronger when confronted with discrimination and their feelings that they alone were not responsible for their success as leaders.

Sanders (1998) selected female deans in large, public universities for her study of leadership styles. She was most interested in the influence that situational variables and organizational roles played on their leadership styles. Sanders interviewed subordinates, a superior, and the leader for each case in the study. She found that leadership behaviors did not exist in isolation. Certain aspects of the situation influenced the key component, which in turn, influenced behaviors and leadership styles of the women. Situational variables rather than gender had the greatest influence on leader style. In a study with contrasting results, a significant relationship between gender identity and leadership style

was found (Frye, 1980). Velivis (1990) explored the leadership styles of 10 female college presidents. She found that a feminine style of leadership tends to be participatory/democratic, uses empowerment, and that a combination of the “ethic of care” and the “ethic of rights” defines their role as leaders.

In an extensive study of leadership styles in women-run organizations (companies) conducted in Australia, Pringle and Collins (1998) found that the leadership in these organizations was generally consultative and interactive. They also identified five main leadership styles demonstrated by the women in their study. The five styles included traditional woman’s values leader, consultative leader, feminist process leader, modified collective leader, and feminist collective leader. The traditional woman’s values leader is nurturing and supportive of traditional feminine ways such as being tactful and supportive. They found that this type of leader is comfortable with hierarchy and differential power and actively encourages other women in the organization to take on specific roles. The consultative leader is clearly the woman-in-charge but the structure is not as clearly defined as with the traditional woman leader. The consultative leader listens to subordinates, exerts her authority, and behaves from a position of experience or age. Although the leader in this style has differential power, she chooses to minimize the power and enact a consultative approach with subordinates. The feminist process leader also operated in a role differentiated organization but the organization itself promoted social change for women as part of its mission. With her style, the leader acts as a coordinator to empower the staff. The leader also actively decreases her power through dissemination of information, consensus decision-making, and by actively training staff members in feminist collective processes. The leader’s strong feminist ideology of equal

power, consensus decision-making, and the valuing of every person embody the modified collective leadership style. In the organizations where the modified collective leadership style was found, the leadership is a combination of collective egalitarianism and pragmatism born of the need for efficient daily functioning. In the feminist collective leadership style there is no distinct leadership embodied in an individual, instead the group always shares the leadership. This approach reflects a radical feminist approach whereby knowledge is shared and consensus is needed for decisions and organizational roles are rotated. This is the ultimate non-hierarchical way of operating when compared to the more common hierarchical organizational structure.

Hays (1999) promoted collaborative leadership as a necessary approach to leadership in the 21st century. Because of the ready access that subordinates have to information, the top-down hierarchical leader who disseminates information is no longer vital to organizations. Instead, a collaborative leadership style where the leader motivates subordinates to work together for their mutual benefit will be necessary in the future. With an increased emphasis on global access to information and on the dependency of teamwork, leaders will have to pull groups together to accomplish business goals. Hays described the collaborative leader as someone who can get teams and collaborative groups together quickly to accomplish a specific task. He believes that collaborative leaders will need to understand the interpersonal dynamics that people experience in the work environment. Collaborative leaders will need to listen, facilitate discussion, and role model collaborative decision-making for their subordinates. Hays pointed out that women are in the best position to benefit from a new emphasis on collaborative leadership as they use this technique regularly.

Leadership styles (authoritarian, participatory, autocratic, democratic, generative) are one of the most common areas of study within the leadership literature. The role of gender and leadership style has become more popular in the past several decades. Some studies examine women's leadership style (consultative, collaborative, process oriented, collective, feminist) while others include related issues such as perceptions of effectiveness, ethnicity, and situation. More recently, the research examines a feminist leadership style, highlighting collaboration as a key component.

Feminine and Feminist Leadership

Loden (1985) published one of the earliest books acclaiming women's superior leadership potential. Like other researchers, Loden believed that there is a masculine and feminine mode of leadership. The masculine is based on the need for control, hierarchy, and analytic problem solving. The female model is built on cooperation, collaboration, low need for control, and intuitive problem solving. According to Loden, the core characteristic of the "feminine" leadership style is the reliance on emotional as well as rational data. Helgeson (1990) described the differences between male and female leaders by using the concepts of hierarchy and web. She saw women as creating flatter organizations and using frequent contacts with staff to both glean and share information. Her concept of web-like leadership places the women leader at the center with an inclusive circle of valued colleagues around her. According to Tannen's (1990) definition of female leadership the world is a network of connections in which consensus is sought.

In Rosener's (1990) significant study of 355 female executives and 101 matched male executives, she coined the term interactive leaders to reflect the female executives

in her study. Rosener found that men use the command-and-control type of leadership while women rely on getting their followers to transform their self-interests into those of the group, sharing power, and enhancing other people's self-worth. She described women leaders as transformationally inclined by encouraging participation of workers, creating inclusive organizations in which all are welcome to contribute, sharing power and information, building the self-esteem of others, and spreading enthusiasm for their work.

In two studies conducted in the United Kingdom, Alimo-Metcalfe (1995) investigated female and male constructs of leadership. In the study, the women's descriptors related directly to transformational leadership (influencing human behavior) and the men's to transactional (influencing outcomes) leadership. Irby and Brown (1995) investigated male and female perceptions of leadership by conducting in-depth interviews with 120 executives (60 female, 60 male) from business and education. Both genders perceived women as giving more attention to detail than men; men delegating detail to others; men relying on their past experiences to solve problems; women as more emotional and apt to seek input from others; male leader's authority perceived as a given based on his gender; and women's authority as being earned over time and through hard work. Both men and women in her study held subtle negative views of feminine leadership traits.

In a study by Daly (1994) that took place between 1987 and 1993, 1,343 men and women from business and education responded to questions regarding their perceptions of leadership attributes of women leaders. Four of the five hypotheses were supported indicating that both males and females considered women suitable for leadership and that their suitability was associated with their nurturing rather than competitive behavior. This

perception of nurturing was found to be compatible with participatory approaches to leadership. In a similar study, Davidson and Ferrario (1992) examined the leadership styles of 95 males and 124 female business managers in the United Kingdom. The result of the study showed that men were higher on structuring (transactional) and women were higher in supporting or considerate behavior (transformational). The studies mentioned above seem to focus on definite differences between men and women leaders with women being more focused on the human (caring) dimension of leadership and men being more focused on the outcome (competitive) aspect of leadership. In a significant and contradictory study, Dobbins and Platz (1986) conducted a meta-analysis of 17 studies in order to determine whether differences in male and female behavior and/or effectiveness in leadership existed. Their findings indicated that male and female leaders display equal amounts of initiating structure and consideration and have equally satisfied subordinates.

The feminization of leadership refers to the spread of traits or qualities usually associated with women leaders. Feminine is a word that refers to the characteristics of females (Fondas, 1996). While theorists debate whether the characteristics are attributed to biological factors or social construction, many agree on the following qualities as “feminine”: empathy, caring, nurturance, attentiveness to and acceptance of others, a preference for open egalitarian and cooperative relationships, and an interest in actualizing values and relationships of importance to community (Belenky, Clinchy, Goldberger, & Tarule, 1986; Bynum, 2000; Fullerton, 2001; Gillett-Karam, 1994; Gilligan, 1982; Regan & Brooks, 1995; Tannen, 1990). Helgeson (1990) asserted that

women's leadership style brings a better balance of attention to the two major dimensions of leadership – organizational and human needs.

Contemporary feminist leadership theory views the nature of leadership differently from more traditional leadership and management theory. Women come to leadership opportunities shaped by different social expectations than their male colleagues. Feminine attributes appear to be derived from cultural expectations. Feminist attributes on the other hand emanate from the active experience of women in the world and are named and claimed by women themselves. Many, if not most, of the qualities of being feminine are subsumed under the qualities of being feminist; however, the notion of feminist connotes empowerment of women to self-define and to act in any and all arenas of the world as they choose (Regan & Brooks, 1995).

Rosener (1990) found that socialization of females and their career paths explain in large part why women lead differently. She describes how the women in her study were able to perform in the command and control style but instead did what came naturally to them. The women described a leadership approach that was succeeding "because of-not in spite of- certain characteristics considered to be feminine and inappropriate in leaders." In a feminist analysis of middle school principal's leadership styles, Doty (2001) found that the women described themselves with a large emphasis on collaboration and teamwork. However, they also indicated that they felt forced to be less "feminine" in order to be a "good principal".

Helgeson's (1990) work, along with Gilligan's (1982) research, made the case that women tend to lead from the center of an organization rather than from the top of the hierarchy. Helgeson described a web of inclusion whereby the leader attempts to bring

people together. Leading from the center allows the leader to obtain information directly as opposed to hearing it only through a series of filters and censors via the chain of command.

Zimmerman (1993) offered six principles for feminist thinking useful in framing feminist leadership: the power of naming; invisibility of women's work; circular progress; what constitutes knowing and knowledge; values of equality, inclusion, and diffusion of power; and the personal as political. Ferguson (1984) argued that feminist theory is not simply about women, it is about the world, but seen from the usually ignored and devalued vantage point of women's experience. Regan and Brooks (1995) described feminist attributes as including firmly held beliefs, a different view of the world, a visionary who has the intellectual capacity to enhance the plausible and the implausible, intrinsically motivated by a moral code of conduct and empowering others to achieve mutually agreed upon goals.

Astin and Leland (1991) viewed feminist leadership as something that reveals the authenticity of the female ethos and experience and reflect what women know to be true of themselves. They carried out an extensive study of three generations of women leaders in education and developed a conceptual framework of feminist leadership. This type of leadership was based on three constructs: the social construction of reality, the interdependence of people, and power as energy not control. Within this leadership perspective there is the assumption that leadership is directed at some greater good rather than personal aggrandizement. Hipskind (2000) studied Indiana superintendents and assistant superintendents and their subordinates to determine whether they possessed leadership characteristics consistent with those found in the feminist literature. The

characteristics measured as descriptive of the feminine ethos within leadership included shared accountability, cooperative relationships, collaboration, and political and social equality. She found a high correlation between subordinate perception and self-perception regarding superintendent characteristics associated with the feminine ethos. Prouty (1996) explored the question of “What is feminist supervision in marriage and family therapy?” with 8 supervisors and their subordinates (therapists). Her grounded theory study describes four themes including feminist ideas, the supervisor-therapist relationship, supervision methods, and empowerment of the therapist. Feminist ideas related to gender, power, diversity, and emotion. A primary finding of the study was the purpose of feminist supervision was to empower the therapist (subordinates) by encouraging the development of competence and professional identity.

Griggs (1989) conducted a study of university women’s centers and women’s studies programs and found that they were led by women whose leadership style represented the alternative leadership style espoused and practiced by Rosener and Helgeson. She identified them as feminist leadership characteristics. These include using consensus making (leading from the center, forming interrelated teams, bring people together instead of looking out for one’s best interest, and protecting one’s power base), viewing power in relational terms as something to share (does not require domination of others and is viewed as a source of synergy that is to be taught and shared), encouraging productive approaches to conflict (not viewed as threatening and negative, cooperative in nature, a group concern rather than a confrontational challenge to an individual leader, and process of resolving conflict as important as the conflict itself), building supportive work environments (creates work settings characterized by warmth, understanding,

encouragement, support, nurturance, listening, empathy, and mutual trust), and promoting diversity in the workplace (taking a stand against oppression related to gender, race, and sexual orientation). Rusch (1991) examined the experience of three doctoral students engaged in research about leadership for women, with a focus on leadership discourse, feminist perspectives, and organizational change. She found that the women struggled with the “everyday problematic” discrepancy between what is defined as leadership and what women “know” about leadership from personal experience. She argued that traditional leadership models and assigned roles create an “everyday problem” for the “knower” of leadership. She further argued that traditional models of leadership fail to consider race and gender. She supported a feminist approach to leadership where individuals use a democratic lens that allows multiple approaches and perspectives to emerge. Smith (1992) concurred with Rusch’s perspective when she advocated that a new concept of leadership is needed in which the tenets generated by patriarchy are lessened; diversity is embraced; and the leader values shared responsibility, equality, and trust. She believes that women leaders must take their personal values and strengths to the political arena in an effort to transform education.

As women have emerged as educational, business, and government leaders, so has the consideration of a unique feminine and feminist form of leadership. Feminine leadership includes reliance on emotional as well as rational data for leading. Feminist leadership relies on the active experience of women in the world and are named and claimed by women themselves. Feminist leadership connotes empowering oneself and others to act in any and all arenas of the world that they choose. The feminist attributes of caring, courage, vision, intuition, and collaboration exist in the practice of most women

leaders as a function of their gender. They emerge from an ethic of care, where the dignity of the person is honored. Feminist leaders are propelled into action on behalf of others. Both feminine and feminist leadership relies on getting followers to transform their self-interest into those of the group by sharing power and relevant decision-making. Sharing of information, creating inclusive organizations, building and nurturing the self-esteem of others and consensus building are all hallmarks of feminine/feminist leadership. Feminine/feminist leaders also tend to embrace flat organization and lead from the middle of the organizational web. The heart of feminine/feminist leadership is that women lead from the authenticity of their experience and reflect what women know to be true of themselves.

Supervisor-Subordinate Relationships

What happens within the work culture when members of the same gender work together? Do culturally constructed gender behaviors help or hinder when one woman has supervisory power over another woman? There has been ongoing debate about whether leader's gender influences subordinate views of leader effectiveness. It appears that research studies on gender differences related to subordinate satisfaction have produced fairly consistent findings.

In one of the earlier studies on the effects of leader dominance on subordinate satisfaction, Bartol (1974) found that high-dominance females did not have a negative impact on subordinate satisfaction although males evaluated low-need-for dominance females more harshly. A year later Bartol (1975) examined the effect of male versus female follower satisfaction and performance. The hypothesis was that groups with male

leaders would significantly out perform groups with female leaders. The result did not confirm the hypothesis. This was one of the earlier studies that indicated that female leadership might not have detrimental effects on subordinate satisfaction and performance. In a study on male and female leaders and impact on subordinate satisfaction Stitt, Schmidt, Price, and Kipnis (1983) concluded that male and female leaders elicited similar levels of satisfaction. Kuschell and Newton (1986) found a general level of dissatisfaction when leaders, regardless of sex, acted autocratically. Autocratic females elicited more dissatisfaction from females than males. Watson's study (1988) found a similar outcome when female employees gave "dominant" women supervisors higher effectiveness ratings than "considerate" women supervisors. However, the female subordinates in the survey reported a greater dislike for women supervisors than for male supervisors, judging them more negatively regardless of whether they were consciously dominant or considerate.

Kuschell and Newton concluded that leader's style was a more important determinant of subordinate satisfaction than leader gender. More recently, Bourantas and Papalexandris (1990) measured gender differences in leadership and subordinate satisfaction and found that neither leadership styles nor subordinates' satisfaction differed between employees with male and female managers.

A meta-analytic review of 17 studies examining gender differences in leadership found that male and female leaders display equal amounts of initiating structure and consideration and have equally satisfied subordinates. Petty and Bruning (1980) hypothesized that considerate supervisory behavior by female leaders would be more positively correlated with subordinates' satisfaction than would considerate supervisory

behavior by male leaders. The findings did not support the hypothesis. Instead male and female leaders' considerations were both strongly, positively correlated with male and female subordinates' satisfaction with supervision. In a study with a similar outcome, Haviland (2001) hypothesized that female graduate level trainees in counseling would be more oriented toward the relational bond with their supervisor while males would be more focused on goals and tasks of supervision. Data analysis did not support this hypothesis, instead finding that a strong supervisory relationship based on an emotional bond with the supervisor for female and male trainees was most related to subordinate satisfaction.

Ragins (1991) noted an interesting finding when she reviewed 21 studies related to gender effects in subordinate evaluations of leaders. She found that gender effects were found in field studies and absent in laboratory settings. In a subsequent analysis of the same data she found that male and female leaders did not significantly differ in subordinate evaluations and that subordinates seemed to respond more to leaders' power than leaders' gender. Subordinates also responded to leader power in a study by Townsend (1998). Townsend surveyed 230 dyads (supervisor/subordinate) to study the relationships between perceived supervisor-subordinate similarity and supervisor-subordinate interactions. The results indicated that supervisor-subordinate similarity was related to perceived supervisor power and the scope of influence over employees. Subordinate views of trust and relationship building with one's supervisor were also related to supervisor power.

In a study focused on the gender of the leader and the gender of the subordinate and their effects on attributions and corrective actions taken toward poor performance, it

was found that although gender of the supervisor or subordinate was expected to have some effect on the responses, it did not (Miyagishima, 1990). When age was added to the measure of subordinate's communicator style expectations and experiences and the relationship on subordinate satisfaction with supervision the results revealed that neither gender nor age significantly related to subordinate satisfaction with supervision (Nikkel, 1993).

A study of women leaders examined how two types of leadership, transformational/charismatic (unique connection between leader and subordinate focused on trust, respect, and confidence) and contingent reward (focused on exchange of rewards for services), and the impact of each on the development of relationships with subordinates (Yammarino, Dubinsky, Comer, & Jolson, 1997). The study revealed that both leadership approaches lead to exceptional achievements on the part of the subordinates. Further, the study found that female leaders are seemingly able to form, operate, and maintain relationships with subordinates on a dyadic basis where each influences one another. The study also implied that when leaders are women, they have the ability to use different behavior approaches with different subordinates with positive outcomes. Similarly, Perry (1992) found that women principals demonstrated a collegial rather than hierarchical tone when supervising/conferencing with teachers. Teachers viewed their women principals as making suggestions in a helpful and comfortable manner.

Few studies empirically examined gender differences from a subordinate perspective, particularly in higher education. However, Rosser (2001) researched women and their effectiveness as deans in the setting of higher education. Rosser was interested

in identifying the factors that best contribute to the leadership effectiveness of both female and male leaders as perceived by their subordinates (faculty and administrative staff). The study included a questionnaire sent to 1,950 subordinates and measured seven leadership domains or responsibility. Among the leadership dimensions examined in the study, subordinates perceived that women and men reflect differing patterns in their role as leaders. Female deans were perceived to be more likely than male deans to enhance the quality of education in their units; engage in research, community, and professional endeavors; promote and support institutional diversity within their units; and manage personnel and financial resources fairly and effectively. Another study assessed the attitudes toward female managers at Pennsylvania State College by female and male subordinates. The study examined differences between academic affairs and student affairs subordinates in their attitude toward women managers. No difference in attitudes toward women managers was found between the two groups with attitudes overall being positive. The most positive attitudes toward women managers were by males in academic affairs followed by females in student affairs (Dugan, 1996). A similar study measuring male/female perceptions of female supervisors in community colleges found that male administrators perceived that they and their women supervisor had similar leadership styles that were high in task and relationship behaviors. Female subordinates viewed their supervisor as having similar leadership styles high in relationship behaviors (Anderson, 1993). While Morrill (1997) did not focus her study specifically on female subordinates, she did examine how the nature of contact between supervisor and subordinate affected the quality of the relationship. She found that subordinates who experienced meaningful

interaction and conversation with supervisors developed relationships with supervisors that were characterized by high levels of trust and support.

The research on the factor of gender in the supervisor/subordinate relationship is very limited particularly in the specific area of women supervising women. Only one study was found to explore the experience of women supervisors. A study by Matheson (1999) looked at the experience of women social workers that supervise females. They described their work as being guided by the values and meaning of their profession, the creation of relationships, the balancing of power and responsibility with care and connection, and using their experience to teach others through storytelling and metaphor.

The impact of gender on supervisory effectiveness has been studied as noted above. The majority of research found little difference in subordinate views of male/female effectiveness or with subordinate satisfaction. Only in a recent study of academic deans in higher education did research reflect different subordinate perceptions between male and female effectiveness (Rosser, 2001).

Power, Gender, and Leadership

Power is a natural component of leadership and an inevitable element in the supervision of others. According to Greenfield and Beam (1980), power is the ability to influence others and is a key to leadership success. Effective leadership is the ability to get things done in a way that satisfies both the organizational goals and the personal needs of the employees or team members. In web-like leadership each participant of the team has some, however small, potential for power.

Kanter's (1977) study demonstrated that power makes a critical difference in leadership. The study defined successful power as the ability to get for the group, for subordinates or followers, a favorable share of resources, opportunities, and rewards. This definition is particularly apt within the higher education milieu. Kelts (1998) conducted a case study of 3 women college presidents and how they defined power. Findings included common threads of how each woman defined power. These threads include power exists in relationship with people; power is viewed as the ability to get things done; and power is used as a means to accomplish purpose, rather than the goal itself. The study also found that the traditional concept of power, in an academic college environment, is applied in a more cooperative way than in a private corporate setting.

Power is often aligned with gender and most commonly associated with male domination (Hartsock, 1987; Lukes, 1974). Results of a study conducted by Laing (1986) suggested that power is gender-linked, specifically masculine-typed, and that the management woman's perception of personal power is inversely related to the masculine sex-role stereotyping of her supervisor.

Cantor and Bernay (1992) found that unconscious practices and social norms support the perception that power is masculine. Brunner and Duncan (1994) found confirmation when the successful, powerful women she studied defined power as collaboration, acting in concert with others, non-hierarchical, and consensus building. Males in her study defined power as dominance or "power over." Her findings indicated that any practice of power that is not masculine or "power over" might be viewed as subordinate and powerless. If the dominant view of power is male and connected to a leader's success, how do successful women have any power? The traditional dominant

view of power is slowly being replaced with literature that power may also be conceptualized as “power to.” Shakeshaft (1987) stated that women use power to empower others and believe that power expands as it is shared and that power is not finite. Konek and Kitch (1994) noted that females appear to see power as a personal, ever expanding attribute to be shared. They visualized power “to” or power “with” others through affiliation rather than power “over”. In an analysis of women in the role of school superintendent, Brunner (1999) found that female superintendents had a high willingness to share power. In similar studies, it was found that women educational administrators/leaders sought to empower their colleagues rather than have power over them. Various levels of empowerment were noted including personal/professional empowerment by using reflection and critique, social empowerment by sharing power “with” rather than power “over” and in the cultural/contextual empowerment by working to create a more just and caring society (Muskopf, 1998; Pasquale, 1995). Brunner & Duncan (1994) also found that women in positions of power might be viewed as successful when they embody a female definition of power. This female definition included collaboration, inclusion, and consensus building based on the belief that one person is not more powerful than another.

It appears that women leaders may be caught in a double-bind when society defines successful leadership as “power over” (male) while expecting women to practice power defined as “power to” (female) if they wish to be successful in the eyes of others. This also raises another confounding issue. What happens to women who choose at times to use a traditionally male approach to leadership? Given the traditional definitions of

male leadership and “power over”, does this mean that women leaders with power are inherently subordinate or that their use of power can be situational?

Payne (1990) researched power communication in three female college presidents. Payne’s premise was that leaders often express their power through communication. She postulated that women are in a double-bind situation if they communicate powerfully. If they appear aggressive, they will be viewed negatively. If they communicate using signals common to women, they may be viewed as ineffective, or ignored altogether. In her study she found that each of the female presidents used a variety of skills to communicate power. Verbal skills included the use of firm speaking, displays of self-confidence, humor, and interrupting others. Nonverbally, they used space and displayed effective listening skills. To overcome the double-bind dilemma, the presidents used power communication skills that involved the appearances of power, the control of money, networking, direct interaction, memo writing, generation of enthusiasm, vocal volume, appropriate timing, and repetition. In order to overcome the perception of aggressiveness, one president used her position as faculty advocate and, at times, used male communication styles. Another used charismatic and reward power bases. The third, worked toward gaining trust and achieving sensitivity toward others’ feelings and in certain situations.

Ropers-Huilman (1998) conducted a textual analysis of power and resistance of feminist leaders in higher education. She examined higher education, women’s education, and feminist leadership literature to determine the definitions of power and the implications of such definitions as they apply to leadership. It was found that all of the literature agreed, to some degree, on two basic strategies about effective leadership. The

first was that they all asserted that in future leadership situations less hierarchical models will be more useful, especially as these models take into account the perspectives of an increasingly diverse population. The second was that there would be a search for dialogic relations with the multiple persons in and affecting the organization. There was marked disagreement over the use of power and the goals of leadership. The analysis suggested that power and leadership can be applied in multiple forms and strategies and that the academy presents its own complexities for the feminist movement.

In summary, power is a critical component of leadership when power is connected to the ability to influence others and therein get the work at hand satisfactorily completed. Successful power can be used to seek a favorable share of resources, opportunities and rewards to benefit subordinates and the related organization. Studies have found that power is often aligned with gender and historically power has been seen as a male quality. Women commonly referred to the use of power as collaboration and consensus building or as empowering others. It appears that women may be caught in a double bind when society defines power as male-like in behavior. For women who use their power in traditional male-like ways, they face dissatisfaction from subordinates. If women use feminine type power, they risk skeptical views regarding their effectiveness from subordinates.

CHAPTER III: METHODOLOGY

Introduction

This chapter presents the research methodology selected for this study of “Women Who Supervise Women: The Experience of Women Leaders in Higher Education.” First, the qualitative research design and rationale is explained. The second section describes the research design including the purpose of phenomenological research. Participant nomination and selection and location/setting for the research constitute the third and fourth sections of this chapter. The fifth section includes the grand tour question. Specific procedures to be followed during the study are outlined in the sixth section. The seventh section addresses the data analysis including the three basic steps to phenomenological inquiry. The eighth and final section explores the various verification procedures used in the study.

Research Approach and Rationale

This study is designed to be consistent with the assumptions of the qualitative paradigm. According to Creswell (1994) this includes the process of understanding “a social or human problem based on building a complex, holistic picture, formed with words, reporting detailed views of informants, and conducted in a natural setting” (p.1-2).

The qualitative paradigm was, in part, selected for this study of women who supervise women in higher education because of the potential for multiple realities as seen by the participants in this study. Based on the researcher's experience as a female leader and supervisor, it was important that the researcher be able to interact with those being researched. Qualitative research often uses the researcher's background as a mechanism for carrying out the research using an inductive process (Creswell, 1998). Most importantly, the use of the personal voice is critical to this study, those being the voices of the women leaders interviewed. Hearing women's voices in this study is important because much of the previous leadership research has reflected a predominantly male perspective (Klenke, 1996). Qualitative data in the form of words can offer rich details and explanations of the processes of phenomena, specifically how women leaders perceive supervising female subordinates.

Design

The design for this study was phenomenological. A phenomenological study explores the lived experiences of a specific phenomenon common to a group of individuals (Creswell, 1998). Phenomenology has its roots in philosophy and has been used in sociology, psychology, health sciences, and education. Husserl (1970) sees phenomenological research as seeking the essence or the central underlying meaning of an experience. These experiences are drawn from the memory, images, and words of the participant. The participant gives the experience meaning and the researcher captures that meaning along with the expressed experiences of the other participants. Themes are then discerned and described by the researcher. The phenomenological tradition was selected

because of the researcher's desire to understand the lived experiences of the women interviewed.

Participant Nomination and Selection Process

Exploratory discussion was held with faculty and administrators who wished to nominate women to be interviewed for this study. Other sources used to identify possible participants included the membership list of the Colorado Wyoming Association for Woman Administrators and Counselors and the Directories for the Colorado Commission on Higher Education and the Colorado Community College System. Eight women were selected and interviewed from various types of higher education institutions including community colleges, research universities, and state colleges. Patton (1990) suggested that the wisdom and strength of purposeful sampling is in the selection of information-rich cases or participants for intense study. The sampling strategy, as described by Creswell (1998), was criterion sampling. This strategy allows the researcher to explore a specific group (women leaders in higher education) who meet specific criteria. The criteria used to select participants were based on the position that they held (line positions in upper administration), where they supervise women (institutions of higher education), present or past experience supervising women, and their availability and willingness to be a partner in this research.

Location/Setting for Research

The setting for the study was community colleges, colleges, and universities within the Front Range of Colorado. Interviews were conducted in a face-to-face manner at the participant's institution and in her office at a time that was convenient for her.

Interview Questions

Preliminary questions were developed as a result of the literature review. Questions were piloted in interviews with two female line leaders in two hospital facilities. The primary or grand tour question is found below. Emerging from the study's purpose and grounded in qualitative tradition, a primary question was asked with secondary questions explored as they naturally arose in the interview. However, it must be noted that due to the emergent design within the phenomenological tradition, some questions were added as the non-pilot interviews proceeded.

Demographic questions:

1. How many people do you supervise?
2. How many of these directly report to you?
3. How many are men/women?

Grand Tour/Primary question:

1. What has been your experience in supervising women?

Procedures Followed in the Study

Potential participants were identified and contacted by telephone and/or electronic mail to determine whether they were interested in participating in the study. The study

was described, including the purpose and approach, time involved, confidentiality, and Human Subjects process. Interviews were scheduled at a time that was convenient for the interviewee. A letter was given to the interviewee from the investigator and co-investigator explaining the study and a consent form requesting the participant's written approval to participate was provided. The interviews were audio taped.

Data Collection and Analysis

This section describes the overall approach to data collection, an explanation of how the interviews were conducted, and description of the data analysis process.

Overall Approach

Patton (1990) described three basic steps to approaching phenomenological inquiry including epoche, phenomenological reduction, and structural synthesis. Epoche is the period in which the researcher must examine herself in order to identify personal biases and remove all traces of personal involvement in the phenomenon under study. This was the approach used by the researcher. Phenomenological reduction is when the researcher brackets the rest of the world and any presuppositions with which she approaches the subject of study as the data is identified. This is to ensure the collection of data in its purest form. The final stage, structural synthesis, involves the articulation of a composite of the experience of the phenomenon and the description of its deep structure (Moustakes, 1994). These three components of phenomenological inquiry were followed in this study.

Interviews

Phenomenological interviewing is a specific type of in-depth interviewing grounded in the theoretical traditional of phenomenology (Marshall & Rossman, 1995). Eight interviews were conducted for this study. Each interview generally followed a protocol including signing of the consent form, clarifying the use of a tape recorder, instructions to the participant about the interview, asking key research questions, probing with follow up questions, and making written notations. A field journal was kept by the researcher for the purpose of making descriptive and reflective notes before, during, and after the interviews. The researcher only needed to conduct one interview per participant. Rich, thick descriptive material was attained in each interview.

Data Analysis

Data analysis is the process of bringing order, structure, and meaning to the mass of collected data (Marshall & Rossman, 1995). The aim of phenomenological data analysis is to capture the quality and texture of individual experience (Willig, 2001). Another goal of phenomenological data analysis is to develop a deep understanding of or empathy with the participants (Miles & Huberman, 1994).

The overall approach to the data analysis had three components: description, analysis, and interpretation (Wolcott, 1994). Description was derived from the data when reported to the researcher by the participants. Participants used their own words to describe their experiences of supervising women. For this study, the researcher transcribed the interview verbatim and each line of the transcript was studied and

analyzed, by hand, as a way to capture the full voice of the participant. Wolcott best describes the approach to the analysis:

...analysis refers quite specifically and narrowly to systematic procedures followed in order to identify essential features and relationships...
(Wolcott, 1994, p. 24)

The data analysis process involved careful and systematic data reduction (Creswell, 1998). A story, or summary, of each participant was written. Imbedded in each story were themes specific to that interviewee. Analysis for the overall study was achieved by identifying these themes and integrating them into meaningful clusters, first within and then across participant interviews (Willig, 2001). Themes were stated and quotes from participants were used to illuminate the meaning or depth of each theme. The researcher achieved interpretation when meaning was attributed to the themes that appeared in the across-interview analysis.

In summary, the overall data analysis process used in the study followed some of the steps recommended by Creswell (1998, p. 148):

1. Conduct interviews
2. Create and organize files for data
3. Read through text, make margin notes, form initial codes (See Appendix C)
4. Find and list statements of meaning for individuals (See Appendix D)
5. Group statements into meaning units (themes)
6. Develop a structural description, "How" the phenomenon was experienced (story)
7. Develop an overall description of the experience, the "essence"

Verification

Creswell (1998) views verification as a process that occurs throughout the data collection, analysis, and report writing of a study that serves to address the question of “Did I get it right?” Issues of internal and external validity and reliability, including trustworthiness (credibility, dependability, confirmability) and authenticity, are important in this study. Validity is defined as the accuracy of the information and whether it matches reality (Creswell, 1998). This was established by using the following verification procedures:

- Substantial engagement, including initial contact with participants, participant interviews, and member checks, assisted in establishing trust with participants, learning about the participant’s institution and position, and checking for misinformation.
- Peer review conducted by members of the graduate committee of the study’s methodology and findings.
- Clarifying the researcher’s bias was provided in the Investigator’s Perspective.
- Interview protocol was used to enhance procedural structure.
- Rich, thick description was used in the Findings section, which allows the reader to make decisions about the transferability of the findings.

Reliability of the study was addressed through the use of an audit trail. The audit trail included notes about the participant nomination and selection process, initial contact and interview protocol records, audiotapes, transcripts of audiotapes, field journal, and records of development of themes and theories.

CHAPTER IV: FINDINGS

Introduction

This chapter provides a description of the context of phenomenon, demographics collected from participants, information about the setting for the interviews, stories for each participant in the study, themes related to understanding the context of the phenomenon, and themes that describe the essence of the phenomenon. Specific examples using quotes from participants are provided in support of themes. The chapter ends with a brief summary of the findings.

Context of Phenomenon

Phenomenology is concerned with the ways in which human beings gain knowledge of the world around them (Willig, 2001). Phenomenological research seeks to understand the knowledge that humans have gained from their specific life experiences. This study, in particular, was aimed at listening to the voices of women as they explained their experiences of the phenomenon of supervising females. In the mid 1980s, women began to specifically recommend the need to study women and reevaluate theories that were based on the experience of men (Gilligan, 1982; Reinharz, 1984). With the surge of popularity in qualitative study, the opportunity to listen to and hear about women's

experience has increased. This study attempts to reflect the unique essence of the participants' voices and to construct meaning from their perspectives.

To understand the participant's perspectives and to construct a picture of the phenomenon, two primary data analysis steps were followed. These two steps consisted of describing the data and analysis of the data (Wolcott, 1994). To describe the data, interviews were transcribed and then coded and a "story" was written for each participant. Imbedded in the stories were the unique themes for each participant. To analyze the data, the unique themes were then combined with the themes from the stories across all participant interviews. The themes emerged as relevant in two ways. Three themes were useful in understanding the context for women supervising women. Five separate themes were found to describe the essence of the phenomenon.

Demographics

Eight women leaders were interviewed for this study. All of the participants worked at public higher education institutions in Colorado. Participants were from universities and community colleges. They held positions including President, Provost, Vice President, Assistant Vice President, Vice Chancellor, and Dean in the areas of Student Affairs, Academic Affairs, and Finance/Administration. In their current positions, the 8 women leaders directly supervised anywhere from one to ten female subordinates.

Setting

All participants were interviewed at their home institution in their offices. Interview length ranged from one to one and one-half hours. In all but one interview, the women were very focused on the interview. In each case, the door was shut and interruptions were minimal. In the one interview where the participant was a bit distracted, she was planning to terminate an employee immediately after the interview. Campus police were present outside her office at the end of my interview, awaiting arrival of the employee to be terminated and then escorted off campus. Nevertheless, she was talkative and engaged throughout our interview.

The women leaders were very professional, thoughtful, and anxious to share their thoughts about the topic. Many commented after the interview that they had never really thought about the issue of women supervising women. One senior administrator said, "Wow, this is a good topic (laughter). Sorry to say I wasn't as prepared as I would like." Each participant was enthusiastic about the topic and interested in learning more about the outcome of the study.

Stories

One of the great values of qualitative research is to hear the voices of the participants involved in the research study. According to Wolcott (1994) qualitative researchers need to be storytellers. They need to be able to build their case and engage the reader when doing so. The following are stories or summaries derived from the interview data for each of the 8 women leaders.

Interview #1 - Story

The interviewee uses a team approach in the supervision of her staff. She believes that women were raised to “cover for one another” and with pride states that her “assistant can speak for me.” She has supervised capable, strong, diverse and challenging female subordinates. Her experience with supervising women focuses on the relationship she has built with them. Her belief is that leadership is a relationship and you cannot lead from a distance. She provides opportunities for subordinates to get to know her personally both in and out of the work environment. She believes that female subordinates appreciate having a personal relationship with her, sharing understanding and comfort with one another. She stresses that working with female subordinates is less formal than working with men who prefer business-like interactions, agendas, and structured regular meetings. With female subordinates, meeting times and places varied. She describes this as the “work was done along the way.”

The interviewee believes that women communicate in a similar fashion, giving each other space and reading between the lines. She believes that “being on the same wavelength” makes collaborations easier .

She places a high value on mentoring female subordinates. She takes them to outside events, shares feedback with them and likes to promote them. She works to understand what their motivations and desires are so she can support them. When problems arise she is quick to take employees aside to find out what is going on and to see how she can help them.

She describes herself as personally and professionally invested in her female subordinates. Trust between her and them is very important to her. Conflict with

subordinates is difficult and takes time. Because she invests a lot of time and energy in subordinates, she takes conflicts personally.

The interviewee describes her leadership style as “new” instead of female, focusing on respect in relationship building, trust, and collaboration. These are traits that she does not think are necessarily female.

Interview #2 - Story

The interviewee’s experience supervising women has been positive and has provided her with great rewards. She has seen and learned a great deal over the span of her career and feels that the climate has changed over the years for female employees as well as women leaders. Supervising women takes more time, energy, and maintenance than supervising men, especially because of the focus on relationships. Her supervisory style is based on being professional, fair, and consistent and on paying attention to employees while still being flexible.

Although some female subordinates enjoy relationship building that is focused on personal and family issues, others prefer their relationships with supervisors to focus on primarily professional issues. Regardless of the focus, she strongly believes in the importance of positive relationships but is careful to place parameters around the relationships with her female subordinates.

She believes that women can be hard on other women by criticizing them, and by not supporting them to move up the ladder. She also points out that if women are outspoken and aggressive, other women will turn on them because they are not behaving like other women behave.

The interviewee believes that women leaders are expected to defend their decisions more than men and that they are not expected to take action to address inappropriate behavior. She feels that women carry their work issues home and back again, taking things at work more personally than their male counterparts.

Failure is a difficult for her whether it is her own or her subordinates. She believes failure is so difficult for women because it impacts their self-confidence and self-concept, as women tend to blame themselves for their own and their subordinates' failures.

Conflicts between women must be handled carefully and are worth the time and effort needed for collaborative resolutions. Communication is key to resolving disputes between women.

She acknowledges that her position has power and she makes a concerted effort to spread it around through the use of communication, collaboration, and consensus building.

Interview #3 - Story

Interviewee #3 sees a marked difference between supervising female professionals and classified subordinates noting that female classified employees are needier, desiring more supervisory attention. She believes that female subordinates are unclear about being able to separate the behavior from the person in work relationships.

She has found that female subordinates have a high need to please others due to their early childhood socialization. Further, she believes that women who move out of this comfort zone (people pleasing) are more competent.

As a supervisor, she creates a positive working environment for female subordinates using hands off - hire good people - empower others – approach. She believes that assessing her subordinates' skills and learning what they need to make them feel good about their abilities is key to successful supervision.

The interviewee describes an androgynous leadership style as the most successful for contemporary women. She believes the combination of male qualities (task-oriented) with female approaches (greater capacity for ambiguity, consensus building and concern for the interpersonal dynamics of relationships) makes for a successful androgynous leadership style.

She believes that women can be hard on other women especially when the power between women is disparate (such as between classified and professional staff). She feels that both subordinates and the general public are quick to question women leaders. She sees jealousy as a factor when some women have what others do not (higher in the pecking order, power, resources, perquisites, and freedom).

In her executive level position, the interviewee feels lonely. She says that as a woman leader you must be comfortable and even appreciate “being alone” with few women peers. She has experienced less compliments, rewards, and recognition for doing a good job as she has progressed through the ranks of higher education.

She believes that for women to be successful leaders, they must really understand and embrace their own leadership strengths. She notes the large numbers of female college presidents that have failed and wonders if it is because they have not yet had enough experience in figuring out who they are and how they work (focusing instead on what others want them to be).

The interviewee sees women having both strengths (collaborative, willing to see the whole picture, group problem solving, and willingness to work very hard at problem solving) and weaknesses (not a clear focus on their own achievement as separate from others and not having good boundaries).

She views conflict as not being easy for women. She explains that confronting differences is not in female's background (women are not supposed to get mad and say bad things because it is not feminine). Further, women have a hard time letting go when a conflict occurs with another female, possibly due to their high value on relationships. She feels that women handle power differently than men. She believes that women do not usually resort to brute power; instead they are subtler and only seem to put on the power when they are scared or unable to manage a situation.

Interview #4 - Story

Interviewee #4 has an informal, humble leadership style preferring to partner with those with whom she works. She brainstorms with others, likes to see others take risks and grow, and thinks about how her actions will affect others. She has an open door policy and a worry about balancing the needs of the individual with what is best for the institution.

She views supervising women as mostly positive but states that she has traditionally been more comfortable with males. The fact that women have been given increased responsibility has caused a great "shift" for her. The interviewee places high value on mentoring others and takes great pride in the number of female assistants she has promoted to more responsible positions.

She finds being a leader challenging and believes that people have different expectations of women leaders. She feels that women leaders are expected to be more understanding and attentive to others' needs and thinks that female subordinates wonder if she is tough enough to make things happen.

The interviewee believes that women leaders get no slack, with no honeymoon period when new to the job. She feels that women have even greater expectations of other women. She believes that contemporary leadership styles are more androgynous with fewer differences between women and men's styles. Her own mentor is a woman whom she describes as having "feminine competencies" and business savvy. She sees this combination of intuition, caring, and being in tune with the work environment along with understanding the business side of things including the ability to make decisions, stand behind them, and being a risk taker as a good example of an androgynous style.

She describes supervision as being harder than it looks and depends on collaboration and communication when working with subordinates. She tends to toss out ideas, remove barriers when needed, and provide support but not necessarily direction. She prefers to focus on similarities rather than differences among subordinates. She believes that men and women have different interactions and expectations of their support staff. She acknowledges that professional staff have different needs than classified staff.

She "distributes power" and does not feel the need to have the traditional trappings of power – including the use of the title of doctor, other formalities, and deference. She has had problems with some women who have earned power but are reluctant to give it away.

Interview #5 - Story

Interviewee #5's experience supervising women has been much more positive than supervising men. Supervising women has been more positive because of the connections she has made with them. She finds her subordinates to be cooperative and informal in her dealings with them. She enjoys supervising women because they talk more and she is able to get more involved with them. She has a personal bond and therefore more at stake with female subordinates.

She describes supervision of female subordinates as enabling them rather than directing them. To supervise women, she must be flexible. She observes that her subordinates work very hard, perhaps so hard that they forget to take care of themselves. She describes them as working to the nth degree and has seen increased illness among the women she works with on campus.

She describes a big difference between supervising classified and professional women especially in terms of accountability and standards. With professional staff she guides instead of directs and sees more flexibility and leeway with their work. With classified employees, she must lay out their work, day to day, with goals and ways of achieving all in writing.

The interviewee struggles with supervision of male subordinates finding that communicating with them is very different from female subordinates. Men need to get to the bottom line and meetings are short with limited discussion and it is a struggle to get the males to share information with her.

She has a female mentor/supervisor. Her own transformation from peer to leader/supervisor was very challenging and she benefited from her mentor during this

transition. She describes herself as an introvert and has had to learn to perform. She excels at tuning into others and is willing to listen to subordinates. She wants to know what other's passions are and what they excel at in their work.

The interviewee describes conflict with females as painful and difficult. Female subordinates have stronger reactions to conflict and it takes longer to get to the root of the problem with them. She says that resolving conflicts with females is a process that takes time because you really must work at figuring out what is going on, what happened, and how to fix it. With men, resolving conflict is much easier because disagreements are short lived. She believes that female subordinates expect different things from her because she is a woman. While she does not sense that they want her to fail, they do have high expectations of her.

She is unsure about whether there is a woman's leadership style. She does see women leaders communicating more than men, talking out decisions more. She feels that women need to focus on their strengths.

Interview #6 - Story

Interviewee #6 believes that supervising women is a double-edged sword; some women are great to work with and others petty. She notes that women are less formal, with casual agendas for weekly meetings. The females she supervises desire more of her attention than the males, with the females wanting to discuss issues and touch base more often. She believes female subordinates are more needy than males wanting frequent reassurance and strokes. She enjoys the friendships that come with supervising women.

She sees that it takes a special friendship to mix business with social relationships.

Female subordinates stimulate her leadership abilities and strengthen and challenge her.

She would prefer to supervise men because she does not have to deal with so many personnel issues with them. Male subordinates are more organized, coming to weekly meetings with typed agendas. The male subordinates also work more independently and “play the game” differently.

The interviewee sees a big difference between supervising classified and professional females. Professional women are easier to supervise. She wonders if their educational background contributes to their maturity, ability to figure out what is important and what’s not, and ability to accept challenges. Classified female employees are more myopic in their view about their work and pettier when comparing goodies with each other (who has the best computer, who has a printer in their office, the best chair, etc.) She speculates that classified females may have less security about themselves and their jobs. The interviewee believes that women can be very territorial, getting upset over the littlest reasons and feels it is important for leaders not to promote this kind of behavior. She sees that women work very hard with some focusing on the “job” and others on a “career.” Career seekers seem to go outside themselves more and be willing to grow. She observes that women have a struggle with balancing their careers with family and educational pursuits.

She has observed that male and female subordinates react differently to change. Men seem to accept change, and the conflict it brings, better than females. Females get hurt and even though men may be hassled by the change, they do not take it personally.

She notes that overall conflict with female subordinates is more comfortable to deal with because they are more willing to discuss the issues in an informal manner.

She describes her supervisory style as focusing on communication and “staying connected.” As a leader, she describes herself as a “what you see is what you get” kind of person. She is able to stand up to her peers, regardless of gender. She believes in being fair and responding to concerns after she has seen the whole issue. She believes in being flexible and in cutting her losses and moving on when needed.

In the past, she has had very positive female supervisors and mentors. She has maintained personal friendships with these women while at her current institution.

Interview #7 - Story

Interviewee #7 sees no difference in the comfort level, tactical or strategic approach, or leadership process in supervising women and men. She has more affinity for supervising females because of wanting to provide a good role model, which she believes women are hungry for in today’s higher education climate.

As a supervisor, she does not see female subordinates as having unique needs. She does believe women still have to prove themselves over and over. Female subordinates want strong leadership, integrity, someone who will listen to them, direction, and the authority to carry out their job.

Women leaders recently have felt freer to acknowledge they are strong leaders without having to be masculine. She believes that women leaders can attain and maintain their female style and still be strong without having to be one of the good ole boys.

She does not think that communication is unique to building relationships with women. She does believe, however, that women tend to have an intense need and desire to have strong interactions and human relationships in their work environment.

The interviewee indicated that she thinks differences in supervising professional and support staffs are primarily institutionally based. She relies heavily on her support staff (executive assistant) desiring to have a close and trusting relationship with her. She believes support staff needs recognition especially as they are on the front line and work for less pay than professional staff. She acknowledges that support staff can be overlooked and misused at times.

She believes women have a tendency to be not as “in your face” with conflict and confrontation as men. Men come in, put the issue on the table, get it over with, and then move on. Women tend to hold onto their conflicts until they explode and at times, dangerously implode. Confrontation with women is subtler and sometimes she does not see it coming. She uses good listening and questions and probes to get women to share their concerns.

Interviewee #7 has been very fortunate in receiving support from other women related to her career. She has had significant mentors including participation in a formal mentorship program and describes women as having pushed, pulled, and recommended on her behalf. She has also experienced the tenseness associated with not being supported by a women colleague.

She describes her leadership style as “very sharing.” She expects others to do a good job. She tells them what she wants and leaves them alone to do their job. She does believe that at some point someone has to make decisions and she is comfortable being

“commander in chief and declaring martial law” when necessary. As a top-level administrator, she admits that you weigh factors, make decisions, and if you are doing your job right, some people are not going to like it. She is comfortable being tough but prefers to use a velvet hammer when doing so.

As a supervisor, she presents issues, asks subordinates for their best input and solutions, and then they sit down at the table and makes a decision. She describes herself as a compromise person and likes to avoid knee-jerk reactions. She likes to send personal thank you notes written by hand or delivered in person.

She thinks it is difficult to balance the needs of individuals with the needs of the institution because of women’s desire to nurture. She believes that women take more things into consideration than men. She feels that men tend to compartmentalize where women are more global in their thinking.

Interview #8 - Story

Interview #8 says that supervising women has been really positive. Her female subordinates have lots of experience and are pretty phenomenal. She thinks that women relate well to one another and have lots in common, especially a focus on family and parenting.

The transition from peer to boss was a challenge for her. She was initially very careful, organized, and not challenging and confrontational. Eventually she began to relax and get more comfortable in her leadership role.

She feels that she relates differently to women than to men in part because women like to talk about their personal lives and men do not. She believes that supervising men differs from supervising women. They come into meetings with outlines and get right

down to business whereas, women generally do not have an agenda and her interactions with them are very laid back.

She has a fairly large group of women that she supervises who work together on the same team. She sees a lack of trust and quite a bit of conflict within this group in part, because some of the players are new and they are just learning how to work together. She has made it clear that they do not have to like each other, but they do have to work well together and this parameter seems to have helped the group dynamics.

In dealing with conflicts with men, they want to come in, sit down, and just work it out. Once men leave a conflict situation it's done, there is an agreement, and it's okay. Her experience with women is that they tend to hold on and personalize the conflict. She believes that men can have a serious conflict and then within even hours, be friends again. Women, however have a hard time letting go.

Achieving a position of power was not something that this interviewee set out to do. In fact, she is uncomfortable with the power associated with the position and says that she does not really want it nor does she like it. She believes that with men, having power feels comfortable and when they have it they like it. She has had to learn about the impact her position has on others and is careful to step back and not jump into problem solving with her subordinates as she might have in previous positions.

She describes herself as a consensus type leader. She likes to get ideas from others and has great respect for the expertise that exists in her organization. She does not believe that she should have to use her power very often to get things done. She feels that if leaders have to resort to power to get things done, then something is wrong. She likes to follow a mentor's advice about power. Her mentor told her, "Somebody has to have

it. Men usually have it, so use it for good, not evil. If you have it, you need to use it.” She feels that in order to have successful consensus building with subordinates that she needs to build good relationships with them first. She likes to get to know people in her organization, one on one.

As a supervisor, she has had to learn to be more direct instead of communicating in a “flowery” way. She has found with subordinates that if she is at all wishy-washy then they will pick up on that right away. She appreciates her subordinates’ invitation for her to tell them exactly what she wants and when she wants it.

She sees a difference between supervising support staff and professional staff. With support staff she feels she needs to watch carefully the types of assignments she gives them because of the limitations within the state personnel system. She thinks that support staff see themselves as not equal to the professional staff so she feels she needs to do lots to make them feel important. She does not want the support staff to feel too subordinate.

While she is willing to take on clerical tasks herself, she has found that can backfire on her causing the support staff to feel like she is doing their job. She finds herself in the role of helping the support staff to get along with each other by teaching them to resolve conflicts effectively.

Interviewee #8 has had wonderful mentors and appreciates when they value family as she does. She also appreciates having a female supervisor because the supervisor is extremely knowledgeable and the interviewee is very motivated to learn from her. She wants her to know that she too has the skills to be a top-level leader. As a woman, and particularly an African-American woman, she feels she will be questioned

more about her skill level. Like many women, she takes failures very personally. She feels that women are socialized to do things right all the time and that they cannot get things wrong. Having a high profile female supervisor, the interviewee sees a double standard with the way subordinates view female leaders. If women leaders “go off” they are viewed much more negatively than male leaders. She has learned that for top-level leaders to be successful, they must acknowledge that there is still a “boys club” at the top and a woman leader has to be prepared to deal with it. She would consider a top-level leadership position at a small institution where she could be true to her values of consensus building, being close to students, working with staff, and being hands on.

While she used to think so, today she is not sure there is a female leadership style. She sees women with more linear styles and men with more ability to focus on the human dimensions in their work. Although she believes women are talented at multi tasking, she occasionally sees men who can do this as well. When decisions need to be made, she has noticed that women tend to want to discuss things more than men.

Phenomena Related to Understanding the Context of Women Leader’s Experiences

In each of the interviews participants discussed issues that were related to their experience as women leaders supervising females. These related issues include the participant’s view of women’s leadership including discussion of women’s leadership styles and specific discussion of the leader’s own leadership style. Understanding the participant’s views on leadership is important in creating a context for understanding their overall experience of being a woman leader who supervises females.

Women's Leadership

Female Leadership Style

Three of the women expressed the sense that some leadership traits are distinctly female. They believe that women communicate more than male leaders including talking out decisions more.

Again, I think we tend to communicate a lot more, use more words, and we talk a lot more in terms of getting to decisions.... One thing I truly enjoy and I noticed it more getting into this particular position that I am in is that women tend to talk a lot more. They tend to work it out to the nth degree (laughter). They communicate a lot more and I love to listen, you know, talk through things, whereas, and again this is only with the two men that I am now looking at, is that they are more bottom line. What is it going to be? Is it a yes, a no? (5)

But, yes women's leadership styles are distinctly different ... I think that having worked with male counterparts as deans. It is very difficult for them [male leaders] to accept the level and energy you need to give what I call relationship building that women are willing to do. I think part of the reason that my hours are so long is that I do give that. And I do think that is unique for females. (2)

Yes, I do [think there is a clear female leadership style]. I think it is carried off differently from one woman to the next. I do think there is.... (6)

Several women commented on the holistic view, a broad look at what is happening to the person and their work, which women bring to the leadership position.

I would like to think that women are more holistic in their approach to leadership and that they and I keep coming back to the sensitivity but that they are looking at a picture as a whole as opposed to if somebody didn't get a chart done and that is the end of their job. They are looking more at what might be the conditions and what might be the cause... a woman I think would ask is there something going on in your life that is affecting your work because I have noticed a difference. I don't think a man would say that. (6)

Because women have that interpersonal skill level that is heightened above what a man's might be, I think we take a lot more things into consideration, men can compartmentalize or departmentalize much easier.

This is here and that is here. I think women have a tendency to be much more comprehensive and global in their thinking and probably make better decisions. (7)

At least 6 participants pointed out how women leaders are blending both traditional feminine and masculine qualities into a more androgynous leadership style.

The female style. It is not a forbidden style anymore. If we called it a style. That we are allowing more diversity as we encourage and as we support we realize that there is shades of gray of maleness and femaleness and sort of blends across. (1)

...I think the most effective female leaders that I have seen really have what I call an androgynous leadership style. I tend to see them as carrying the kind of task orientation that sometimes often marks very successful men but tempering that with a greater capacity for ambiguity, a greater capacity for consensus and relationship, greater concern for the dynamics, the interpersonal dynamics of a situation. (3)

But I think that goes back to the fact that the styles have started to merge. I think females started out trying to emulate male styles thinking that is what was really important and key to moving up and there is some validity to that; the whole super mom sham of the 80s that I have to be able to do everything. ...But I think that at the same time that women were coming to terms with, it is ok to make some compromises; men were doing the same thing. They were able to be more human to be able to have more of a personal side at work so I think they were shifting at the same time. So I would say that while there are some differences and I think there definitely are still differences, I think there are fewer than there used to be. (4)

Well, you know I certainly have read a lot about women's leadership and that there is a style if you will. You know I have really thought about this a lot and I struggle with it too because on the one hand I know that women are a lot more open and there is a lot more connectedness but I see that in men, I see that in men. I don't know that I am really committed to saying that there is a women's leadership style. (5)

You know I used to think there was [a female leadership style] and now I am not so sure. I think it is a lot of different things. I think it depends on people's background, how they grew up. Like I was saying, that I had a female director who was corporate and her style is very different and people would say it is very male. ... Yet I have men that are very much you know into family and personal stuff and touchy feely and lead that way. (8)

Even now I look at a lot of leadership positions and they are either male based or the women doing them display some of the stereotypical male characteristics. Again, male leadership style has many things that we can learn from and adapt and adopt because we as women can drive ourselves crazy and men can be very productive in other ways and maybe the combinations are good. (2)

As I look across the country, I think that there is less and less of the demagogy model and more and more of the sharing kind of model. ... I think that women have recently felt freer to acknowledge that they are strong leaders and that they can be strong leaders without being masculine. That would be the biggest change that I have seen in women leaders and watching women leaders. That they can attain and maintain their female side, that genteelness, and still be strong without having to become one of the good ole guys. (7)

Although there was widespread agreement about the positive movement toward an androgynous leadership style, one participant pointed out that women still have to be careful to take a different leadership approach than men – if they act masculine then others will view them less positively.

In fact, it is kind of interesting that if a woman, when I look around the people I supervise, some people will be aggressive or more outspoken. Her own gender can kind of turn on her because you are not behaving the same way other woman behave. (2)

Successful Women Leaders

Some women leaders felt that others held unique expectations of them because of their gender. They felt that they must explain their decisions more than men in order to be successful. One participant said that she felt that women were expected to negotiate until the issue, or the differences surrounding the issue, died. Some women talked about the doubts that others held about their ability to be tough on behavior and to make difficult decisions.

So, I suspect that the expectation was high. When I first moved into this position a lot of women, especially the women would say, “Well now

we'll have someone who will listen which is probably another women's leadership style. We are listeners and responsive in that respect and I heard a lot of that. Well now we'll have a woman there and she is going to listen to us. And so, I think that was an expectation, at least I heard that a lot. That I would not, I would try to flatten the organization, rather than maintain the hierarchy, if you will. That I would be able to communicate with people regardless of where they fall within the organization... that I would be at least be open to listening – that type of thing. (5)

... because the previous _____ was a male and was here for 14 years, sometimes students are really surprised that there is a female _____ and so there is a little different set of expectations... Channel _____ did a speaker's panel on TV and for that they did a segment where they came out and shadowed me with a camera for a little while and then talked to a staff member and when they interviewed her it was interesting to me, it was a reminder to me that her expectations were much different for me than they had been for _____. And part of it was to see how I was going to handle some things because we have had a pretty serious budget issue here and have had layoffs ... And so people have really been watching just to see how I would handle that and male or female they would have those questions but I think there is a little different twist to it. (4)

What came to mind when you were asking that question is that I tend to have a fairly even keel. People expect that, they don't expect me to get too excited and that there have been times when I have really gotten angry and people are caught completely off guard because they don't see that as part of who they see me as being. And maybe that is maybe when I have said, "Hey, this is going to stop and we are not going any further" which is probably an exertion of power of my position. That often times surprises people because they are do used to me not asserting that ... (1)

... women in positions of responsibility need to make difficult decisions and sometimes that may surprise people. The budget process for the division, I am very clear on where it is participatory and where the responsibility falls on me and I think that works effectively as a result. But does it surprise people? Yes. And can people actually become offended? I think that women will pick at women leaders especially if there is not time for relationship building. So, who will make strong decision? Who will take approaches without adequate explanation and our expectations of women are that they will do a lot more explaining so it's not arbitrary. Whereas, men perceive it as part of their job. They do it. (2)

And that is back to with coming together of male and female traits in management and leadership, I think that is changing too and there is greater expectation for the men to also have those feelings and to express them. For instance, with the reduction in force, I think that the

expectations for my reaching out to people are different than what they might be if I were male. ... To be more communicative, in particular, but I think the other side of that is there is the question of is she going to be strong enough to make this happen and I think that one is a big one....this is just a perception, but it seems to me that people watch my expressions very carefully. If I don't have lipstick on or I looked washed out, people will say, "Are you ok?" that kind of thing. I am not sure men get that kind of attention. (4)

According to the participants, women who know themselves well and who focused on their strengths are successful. One high-level leader indicated that she believes that women professionals on her campus have been forced to move out of their comfort zones as they have grown in their educational and professional pursuits. She believes that this growth process forced women to become less people pleasers because they have been forced to be competent in and of themselves. Know and honor thyself seems to be key to several of the women leaders in this study.

... I think that women will not be successful leaders until they really understand and embrace what I think is their leadership strengths. Instead of being what men are or instead of being what everybody else wants me to be which are sometimes different things. The older model of "be a good little girl" and do all this and please the world or be something over here doesn't to me really capture the strength that I think women have in leadership. So, I think it is very, very clear that you need to know what those are and you need to say that I am not going to give them up. ... And I don't think often, when you talk about why women fail, I don't know if women have had enough experience yet in how to really figure out who they are and how they work. (3)

I would love for women to eventually know they could actually come to work as they do in any other environment with the values they hold and could hold true to those values and allowing women to say what you need to find a good fit for yourself. If you walk into an organization and the values or the ethics don't fit yours then you need to hold strong to those and move on and move out. (1)

To be a successful leader some of the participants agreed that one must really understand oneself, embrace one's leadership strengths, and be true to who you are. The

not-so-easy part of being a high-level female leader in higher education was mentioned in two interviews. The participants mentioned how tiring and lonely the jobs are at or near the top of colleges and universities. They mentioned feeling “blamed” when things go wrong and noted that the higher up you move the less compliments, rewards, and recognition you receive for doing a good job.

And I find that the higher up you go you are responsible for everyone’s actions within the organization and so if a faculty member is doing a poor job in the classroom it reflects on me. Now I am distanced from that classroom but the President is going to hold me responsible because, you know, why didn’t you do something about it? You know, so what does that say about my style when I don’t handle that and you think, God, that’s not fair. ... that’s just the reality....it makes you tired... the nature of being close to the top. (1)

One of the most important things if you want to be a successful leader, as a woman, I believe you must absolutely be comfortable and be in some ways almost appreciate in a strange sort of way being alone because you are going to be. I was in _____ and there was a president and five vice presidents and I was the only female in the group and I had all deans and every one of my deans was male and certainly in _____ it was different but you have to recognize that almost at no level that you are will you ever really have a peer group. Particularly if you move up in higher ed. The peer group that you have becomes smaller and smaller and smaller. The numbers aren’t there. ... So I think you have to be reasonably comfortable with that, what I call, aloneness. It will just be there. (3)

Worries About Failure

Worries about failure were mentioned by 5 participants. Several women described situations where they felt they had failed at something and related how bad it made them feel. In describing the decision to terminate a non-performing employee, one vice president said:

It is like, that has worked well here for all but one person and so I had to evaluate... can I salvage this... is there anything here worth salvaging? Do I take a different approach, can I get this job done and sometimes you have

to admit that you have to cut your losses and move on and that is where I am at. I know that I cannot do a personality transplant and I know that this person has many more issues and he is in the wrong place. ... It is very sad and this is the first time I have had this kind of experience when I could not get some level of improvement. I usually can get people to work better than this and I am not succeeding. (6)

One woman connected the difficulty women have with failure as deeply rooted in self-esteem and women's desire for perfection.

I think women's feelings are involved in their job and perhaps men's are as well but some feelings are ego driven and some I think are emotionally driven. And because your emotions are wrapped up in this job it is almost a personal failure to not do well in a job. ... I don't as I understand it experience failure very well. The popular theory is you have to try things and you can't always guarantee they will work and sometimes you fail but women have a very difficult time with failure and so I find this buried in their self-confidence and their self concepts are affected by that which makes it harder. ... As women, we just personalize a lot so if we fail how can we possibly be confident enough to go forward again. (2)

We have to know more because we are going to be questioned more on our credibility and then for an African-American women on top of that I feel like it is really important. But personally, I just feel like I have to know and then you never really feel like you know enough and you never feel like you want to make a mistake and as (_____) told me, there is nothing that some white man hasn't done before and survived and probably got promoted. And I thought, oh yeah! So it helps, but we still can't afford to make those kinds of mistakes that much.... And we take it so personally. It is like looking at evaluations you know. I'll have 20 that says I am wonderful, great and they'll be 2 where there is maybe a little something and you concentrate on those two.... Women are socialized that they have to do it right all the time and when you don't then something is wrong with us. And we are always turning to ourselves first and asking what is wrong with us and I think that is what keeps a lot of women from moving into leadership positions. (8)

Participant's Own Leadership Style

The women in the study described themselves as informal, accessible, empowering, willing to listen to others, fair, and collaborative. One participant described herself as "what you see is what you get" and another confessed that she is probably a

little more aggressive due to the fact that she has had male supervisors throughout her career. Each woman was introspective about their leadership style and many mentioned how their style had changed or “matured” over the course of their career.

For the most part, mine is very sharing. We talk about it, I expect people to do a good job and I tell them what I want and then leave them alone and wait for the results because otherwise I am doing their job and my job. ... Well, I share a lot and shared governance, don't go there. Shared communication but at some point someone has to make a decision. Now that would be the president, so you weigh all those factors and you make a decision and if you are doing your job right, some people aren't going to like it and they probably aren't going to like you very well at least for a time being ... But if people believe you are genuine and you are really trying to do the right thing, so you just have to be commander in chief and declare martial law... I am a compromise person. I think that is one thing that women do in leadership roles that men have a much more difficult time with because they see it as you lose, a zero sum kind of instead of the best interest of the institution. So if I were to describe my leadership it would be compromise, a distance approach and my supervision would be very inclusive, shared decision making. (7)

Yeah, I tend to be very collaborative. I like teamwork. I like to work with individuals in enabling. That is really where I get my ... that excitement if you will. I don't, I like to surround myself with people who are complimentary to me, to my style. I am very much an introvert although I have had to learn to perform and I think I do that pretty well. It is not comfortable for me, so I purposely look for people who are more extroverted than I to gather information and be able to feed it to me. (5)

For me to be the extremely female type probably goes against a lot of what I have been raised. So I am not really sure I would say my style is typical female. I think my style is what I am comfortable in being. And that has a whole lot to do with respect in relationship building, trust and in that is probably the hurtful part of being a supervisor that whole lot of trust, collaboration which again is part of the foundation I believe in and if you have those three, the trust, respect, and collaboration then that probably would sum up what I believe in terms of leadership. (1)

Yes, I am not really in your face but pretty much what you see is what you get. What I say is what I mean. I do not consider myself passive aggressive. I consider myself saying what I have to say. (6)

Definitely more of a consensus builder. I like to get ideas. I am more comfortable with taking those ideas and making decisions.... I would

really prefer to get input because I do think there is really great expertise out there.... I don't think you should have to use your power to get things done. I feel like if you have to do that too much something is wrong. Now what I need to learn is when to use it appropriately. (8)

In summary, many of the participants agreed that a female leadership style existed and that such style is accepted in today's higher education administration environment. This female leadership style includes enhanced communication and collaboration, a keen focus on relationships with others (especially other women), and having a holistic view exemplified by women's ability to see the big picture and be willing to work hard at getting the right decision or outcome.

Women participants voiced support and belief in the concept of an androgynous leadership style. It was suggested several times that today's leaders are adopting the most effective styles from both genders.

A number of the participants observed that others have unique expectations for women leaders. Women leaders are expected to understand the human impact of things. They are expected to provide more personal attention and communication to others. There was some sense that doubts may arise about women leader's ability to make tough, hard decisions. The point was made that women leaders, particularly newly appointed ones get no honeymoon, and that women leaders in general are quick to be questioned by others.

All of the top-level leaders acknowledged the stress and demands on them. They felt their job could be lonely at times with less frequent positive feedback for doing a good job. Failure was a worry for several of the leaders, in part because of watching other high profile women leaders fail, and in part because of how personally they take their own shortcomings. One leader mused about the reasons for women leaders' failures. She

wondered if some women have failed because they had not had enough experience in figuring out who they really were and how to best use their strengths.

Supervision

In an effort to fully understand the context in which the participant's viewed the experience of supervising women, supervisory style was analyzed separate from their leadership style. It is presumed by the researcher that the participant's leadership style relates to their work throughout the institution and perhaps even within the broader community. This section on supervisory style is intended to describe the way the participants viewed how they interacted with their subordinates.

Supervisory Style

Overall, the women leaders described their supervision as fair, consistent, clear, attentive, and focused on collaboration. Several described their efforts to serve as a mentor to their subordinates by providing them with sincere feedback and supporting and promoting them.

I really don't see a huge difference in supervising women and supervising men. I think there is more affinity, obviously to me to supervising females... I think there is an affinity towards providing a good role model that men may not. The breadth of providing that role model, while men I think look at the leadership of a women in terms of the strength and characteristics and how that can benefit them, I think women have a tendency and I am internalizing now having had several women who supervise me, I look at them as a role model more than as a boss and so I think that is something that happens when you are supervising women. Women look to you to be some kind of role model. That would be the affinity that I was talking about. A sisterhood if you will. (7)

But my particular style tends to be very hands off. I believe you ought to hire good people. I believe you ought to empower them to do their job;

that you ought to try to create a work environment that they like to work in and come to work in. ...I see my role as a leader and as a person in a position with more authority than somebody else. ... So, kind of the way I look at it is to try to make an assessment of what their skills are, and what they need to really make them feel good about their own abilities and the work that they do and try to put underneath that the supports to make that happen. Sometimes I try to put around it parameters so that they don't go too far and drown or they don't get overwhelmed. (3)

... and part of my supervision has always been getting to know people, wanting to build that relationship. Not to any level of discomfort but, you know, if I certainly understand your motivations and desires then I can support and understand quickly from you what your perspective is. (1)

You know, I view my role as figuring out how to toss out ideas, remove barriers where needed, provide support vs. directing. (4)

I have had to learn to be more direct, Um, when I really want something, I need to say here is what I want and here is when I want it instead of flowery which is what I did before, "When you get a chance could you get this to me?" and you know sometimes they get it to you and sometimes they don't. ...I found that if I am wishy-washy in any way they will pick up on that right away and I can't be that way. (8)

Empowering Subordinates

Four participants made reference to empowering their subordinates. When talking about power one mentioned spreading the power around, another mentioned distributing her power.

I think that most female leaders and supervisors try to walk a very fine line. They have a position of power but they very much approach it from a consensus building, team building, open environment and they even try to create equality amongst the employees. I know I do. (2)

I guess part of me does not have a need to assert the power. It is just like requiring everybody to call you Dr. so and so, which I think in some institutions is the case where there is encouragement to do so or doing whatever you need to do in order to tell people I am here and that I come with power. Most people in this organization would say that my assistant probably has as much power as I do on any given day. (1)

... It (power) is just what you give, not what you get; I think you have it by giving it away. (4)

... I really see my job is to empower my people to do the kinds of things that they will either do a whole lot better than I'll do or that I don't want to do or that really enable me to better do what I need to do. (3)

Another aspect of empowerment as a supervisor is when two of the women talked about promoting female subordinates.

... and so I had this reputation of never being able to keep a secretary and it is not because I am so horrible to work for, I don't think, but generally my secretary would end up doing something different, being promoted and doing more either within the institution or elsewhere and so it just kind of turned into a joke. And I had someone sit down with me one time and say it must be terrible because you just had someone trained and helping you out with things and then boom the person is gone and in all cases they were female. It was wonderful, it always felt like such a great thing that someone would discover her own abilities and capacities and develop the capacity to move on and do more... (4)

I have always wanted to promote if someone is moving ahead in our classified system – you know we have all these wonderful levels. He (a male peer) would always comment to me that I was always putting him in a difficult position because he did not want to promote his secretary. And she was doing an excellent job. It had nothing to do with performance. But he wanted to keep her at that level. Now I do not know what message he intended to deliver with that. I can only guess. (1)

Paying Attention to and Communicating with Subordinates

Three of the women leaders made reference to the importance of staying in touch with their subordinates through regular communication and by paying attention to their employees through visits and listening.

I mean I try to walk through all of the offices when I get a pop each morning and just make sure I hit each office and go through and say how are you doing. And some people, you know, "can I talk to you later about..." and that's what they need. There are other people who when you say, "So, how are you doing?" will tell you how they are doing and they really want you to listen. That is significant amount of time devoted to what some people would perceive as non-work related

things but when I am turning around in August and people are being asked to pull heavy workloads, long hours, and be positive, that's where they step up that extra mile. (2)

Well, it is important to me to find out what is going on and to connect with them (her staff). ... Men, I think, work a little more independently. Of all my experiences, I seem to spend a lot more time with the women than with the men just discussing things and wanting my opinions more than the guys will. (6)

They want strong leadership, they want integrity, they want you to listen to them, they want someone who will genuinely give them a charge and then give them the concomitant authority to do it. ... You know I think communication is a real draw for a foundation on which to draw for long lasting relationships but I don't think that, in my case that is exclusive to women. (7)

Challenges of Supervision

Most of the participants of this study made reference in some way to the challenges of supervision. One leader summed it up by saying that "It's harder than it looks" to be a supervisor. The challenges raised range from issues about doing what is best for the individual versus what is best for the institution to whether it is easier to supervise men or women.

And I think that you get to be an inspired, young professional yourself and you're just kind of using the successful methodology used before and you keep using it but people change. And so there is not only the supervision of women at different stages of their lives. I look at _____ (an older female subordinate), or somebody who I am working with now who is as she laughingly calls it "we are all turning into middle aged, empty nesters" and I look at _____ (younger female subordinate) or other people in _____ (name of department) who are building families and trying to complete their education simultaneously and have the demands of an ambitious job. And their needs are very different and I struggle a little to meet those needs. (2)

I guess one thing I can say is that supervising is so much tougher than it looks. It is incredible. ... And so what I have tried to do and I am not always successful is to think about... we do so many things organizationally that effect 400 people but think about how that effects this one individual. That's critical but you have to make decisions

sometimes that really do have negative impact on individuals in order to keep the whole moving forward and in order to keep your fiduciary responsibility. And so how you balance those and not get calloused to individuals but on the other hand not get so drawn into individual's issues that you can't make the whole work. That is just an incredible challenge, I think. (4)

I went to her (she is referring here to her own supervisor) a lot in terms of supervising men, the men that I have, mainly because it was difficult. One of the men was sure that he was going to get this position so there is a little bit of that. And so the question was more that how do I say what I need to say. Do I need to talk in terms of sports metaphors or what (laughter)? I mean, quite frankly, I did. I said do I always have to keep asking and asking and asking the right question which is again going back to if I ask the right question but don't ever expect that I will get more than that? And that is a reality and so I have had to learn to deal with that. (5)

So I was really careful in the beginning. Really trying to make sure I was really organized. Really super professional when we had meetings. And then I just had to relax, as I got more comfortable. Not that I am not organized and all but you know I was very careful to let people talk and get everything out and I wasn't not confrontive but not challenging. I didn't challenge enough. (8)

I would say, and I don't know that it is unique, but I would say that I have not had the experience with men accepting change the way I have had women not accepting change. And it is not so much that you want to come in and change everything, it is just that you want them thinking and take the blinders off and just say, hey maybe that would be a better way to do that... They didn't embrace change at all. But the reaction to that and I don't think it was more accepted by the men than the women, but their (the females) reaction to it were completely different. And the women were much more hurt by it and that you should even think that what they were doing wasn't the best way to do it and that they weren't already doing it. The guys, you know didn't like the bother. ...And I don't know if this is gender specific but my experience has been that women don't accept the changes or the fastness of the changes in technology than the men. (6)

In summary, the women leaders tended to spread their power around. They empowered subordinates by encouraging them to speak their mind, creating a positive work environment for them, and promoting them to new or better jobs. Paying attention

to subordinates through communication and frequent contact was mentioned as important to supervisory style. Challenges of supervision include the unique issues that arise when supervising women at different stages of their lives. Needing to balance the needs of the individual and those of the organization raised challenges for two of the participants. Discussions about the inherent challenges of supervising men were also illuminated.

Women Can Be Hard on Other Women

Some of the women leaders expressed the view that women can be hard on other women. They described how some women seemed reluctant to support other women, particularly as they were promoted into powerful positions. Other leaders disagreed saying that they had never felt a lack of support for their success from other women. However, most leaders concurred on the difficulty women have in dealing with conflicts with other women.

Zero Sum Game

Three women leaders expressed the view that some women seem reluctant to support other women, in part, because of the belief that by doing so it would somehow take away from their own success. Competition and jealousy were also mentioned as indicators of how women can be hard on other women.

You know my thought, Susan, is there was a period of time, and I assume that this might be true for people still, that if I encouraged you, if I supported you, I am taking away from myself. That if I help you get some sort of limelight, then that of course overshadows what I am doing. I would hope that we are better than that but I do not think that is universally true. (1)

I believe that women generally have more problems with other women having power than with men having power. ... It is a socialization issue. I think it is a whole larger society issue about "men are in charge." There also seems to me, I don't know whether this is women in terms of competitiveness. ... I don't think that women sometimes have a very good focus on their own achievement as separate from somebody else. I mean it is not dependant on you failing or me winning. I don't think they have good boundaries, I don't think about competing. (3)

Women do more comparing with others. Well is that fair to say? How can I possibly assess that? Women do a lot of comparing amongst themselves about their situations about their happiness, their ambitions, about how they are treated. I don't know if more is fair because I can't really speak to that with men and they may compare different things. But women are willing to compare, not just the way they perform but who likes people and who doesn't like people and how they are treated. ... And so women can come under a lot of criticism, even from female employees. ... I mean I have heard women be called things or say things about their decisions that you wouldn't say about someone else. (2)

Moving Up the Ladder

There are differing views on the experience women leaders have had with being supported by other women to move up the ladder. In one case, the leader stated that jealousy had not been a problem for her but in another section of the interview mentioned that it had.

I have worked at the college for 25-27 years. And so just about everybody has been my peer (laughter). So, when you move up there is an expectation that you will succeed. And I feel that, I don't sense that I've moved up and women especially, "Oh, I hope she falls on her face." I don't sense that. I've never sensed that. (5)

I think also over the years, and I've heard people say that women have more jealousy of other women and there is sort of a sense of competition or whatever. I haven't seen a lot of that necessarily. I don't think that has been a huge issue for me. ... I have had in my career a number of times where I have been promoted over others which is a whole other topic with all the wonderful things that can happen with that and all the really difficult, no honeymoon, jealousies and all that. (4)

You would think that what female employees do is support women moving up the ladder, but it is foreign in some respects, and so depending on where women are in your organization, they may be more understanding because they are dealing with it as a supervisor. ... It is almost like you are turning on your roots. All these female traits that brought you up here and now you are not appearing concerned. And that is a problem for leaders because your funnel narrows and your time with each employee is narrower and narrower at each level that you move up in terms of supervision. (2)

Well, two of the mentors I chose are women and one was male. And the difference between the two female mentors was absolutely polarized, how they behaved towards me on the continuum. One was very supportive, calling me a lot, communicative. It was just collegial. The other one was "I know more than you know. I've been there before. You are a threat to me. I don't really have anything to say to you." It was, there was almost tenseness in the air between the two of us when we would even be in the room together. (7)

I don't think it is necessarily regretting the choices, but I don't think women are really very good about celebrating the successes of other women. I think men actually do a much better job of that. (3)

In summary, many of the participants described situations where women were hard on other women. Competition was mentioned as one component of the strain that can develop between women. Differential power was thought by one leader to be a reason for competition between women. Another leader thought that women tended to compare themselves with other women and that comparison led to jealousy. Not all interviewees felt a lack of support from other women. In fact, 2 leaders mentioned specifically that they felt that other women wanted them to succeed.

Summary of Phenomena Related to Understanding the Context of Women Leaders' Experiences

The related phenomena, of women's leadership, supervision, women can be hard on women help to set the context for understanding the primary emergent phenomena or themes that arose in this research. In summary, the related phenomena include the finding that women leaders believed that while there are distinctly female leadership traits they also provided strong support for an emerging androgynous leadership style for both men and women leaders. The participants connected a holistic approach to women's leadership that is, seeing the big picture. This phenomenon was reinforced by one of the challenges described in their comments about supervision, that of balancing the needs of the individual with those of the institution. The women felt that unique expectations befell women leaders including the expectation that women leaders are more communicative and concerned for others. In order to be successful, the participants believed in the importance of women leaders knowing themselves well, including their strengths and weaknesses. For those leaders with top-level leadership positions, there was agreement that loneliness and fatigue were associated with their position. Regardless of the level of their position, a number of the women leaders worry about failure and how failure can impact one's self-esteem. The women described their supervisory styles as empowering others, listening, connecting, and being fair. They also found challenges associated with supervising women in various developmental stages of life and with the different but equally challenging dimensions to supervising men. And finally, competition and jealousy were included as issues that sometimes arise between women.

Analysis of the Essence of the Phenomenon

In phenomenological studies the human experience is examined through the detailed description of the participants being studied (Creswell, 1994). Patterns or themes are identified as the data are analyzed. Finally, the true meaning of the experience is extracted by the researcher and reveals the essence of the phenomenon (Patton, 1990). Five themes emerged as the essence of the phenomenon from this study of the 8 women leaders and their experiences supervising women. The themes include Female Subordinates Are Capable and Work Hard; Supervising Females Is both Positive and Negative; Relationships with Female Subordinates Are Flexible, Informal, Critical, and Complex; Conflict with Females Is Difficult and Time Consuming; and a Difference between Supervising Support Staff and Professional Staff.

Below, each theme is introduced in general and followed by a break down of the specific components of the theme. The specific component is introduced and quotes from various participants follow. The overall theme is summarized at the end of the section.

Female Subordinates Are Capable and Work Hard

Participants in the study communicated their awe for how capable and hard working their female subordinates are. Not one supervisor referred to subordinates as inferior in their overall performance on the job. Several leaders worry about how hard their subordinates work.

Female Subordinates Are Capable

The women leaders in this study described their subordinates as capable, strong, cooperative, diverse and challenging. Female subordinates were described as more sensitive than men with a high need to please others.

I don't think that the women I have supervised have been any more emotional or any more or less linear focused or that they have any less competitive direction. The women that I supervise now are both very strong, very different, challenge one another in terms, I mean there is no process where they feel they need to be swayed one way or another even by me. ... We all sit here without a help mate, with other issues that take a lot of our time in terms of just mental thinking and also with the dedication to working and working long hours and making things work... (1)

And most of them [female subordinates] have had a lot of experience and are pretty phenomenal women so it's been a really great experience. (8)

I find them to be more [than men] collaborative, more willing to think about the whole and perhaps the long haul; be willing to give up short-term gain that might happen for their college or their area as they look at the big picture. They tend to be more, I would call them group problem solvers. They will come in here with the presenting problem, I've thought about this and I've thought about this and I've thought about this. I think it is a very different style than men. (4)

They [men], I don't want to say they are insensitive, but they are not as sensitive as women. Women pick up on body language quicker – they can be hurt quicker. Men just don't do that. (6)

Women are as capable and as intelligent and as creative as anyone else I supervise... (2)

Female Subordinates Work Hard

Four of the 8 women talked in detail about how hard their female subordinates worked and the toll it takes on them.

I have thought about this a lot, thinking why is it that so many women I am working with now have breast cancer or are getting ill like that. These are women in their 40s and their 50s. I don't know if it is just that they are

around me now because they work and we are at that stage in our lives that we are more susceptible to these kinds of things, and it is the stress. I think there is something that can be attributed to stress and that we are not taking care of ourselves like we should. I'll speak for myself... we don't go to the doctor when we don't feel well because we have this to do – our professions are taking over. Whereas, you know maybe with women who don't work but are experiencing the same things but they are not here. We don't want to be seen as weak so we put on the stronger mantle if you will which I think is rubbish but anyway... (5)

I think women generally are afraid to ask for that [flexibility to say they need time off.] I watch having two other women here who are single head of households with both day time and night time responsibilities and all the people I supervise are giving back vacation days every single year and I know why. When do you take them and how easy is it to say, Susan, I have a soccer game at 4:30? I mean if you have a soccer game sometimes you don't even share it. You figure another way to sneak out of the office. No, I think women are afraid to say I have some other issues in my life because that says I am incapable. (1)

They will get the work done and they are very proficient.... The other thing that I find with women, they are tremendously creative individuals and they are... because they are multi-taskers in some respect they get lots of things going in lots of places and feel an obligation to get them all brought to closure on some timeline. The women I supervise, I've had to encourage them to learn to speak up and say this is what I can do now and this is what I may have to give up. We continue to accept responsibilities and continue to take on tasks because that is our job and I do believe that to do a good quality job we may have to learn to evaluate the importance of tasks. In supervising women that is certainly not their scope. They are all women who I think have moved further and further away and can't be everything to everyone. On the flip side, the great part with women has been that I have met some women who cannot for home reasons or whatever cannot go that extra, extra mile but women will give and give and give. The sad part is that they will burn themselves out or exhaust themselves or emotionally upset themselves but when you need somebody and you look around who do you ask... (2)

In summary, women leaders describe their subordinates as hard working and competent and as more sensitive than their male counterparts. The participants view their subordinates' motivation for hard work as, in part, a desire to avoid the appearance of being weak and incapable.

Supervising Females Is Both Positive and Negative

Women leaders found the experience of supervising females to be both positive and negative in nature. In addition to the strong job performance of their subordinates, the supervisors also appreciate the relationships that result from interactions with female subordinates. On the other hand, they seem to find the petty, jealous aspects of interaction with women somewhat distasteful. One leader fell squarely in the middle saying, "I have read lots of things where a lot of people have said that women are much more difficult to supervise or people will conversely say I don't like working for a women and those kinds of things. You know honestly, I can come up with examples on both sides that I think it all shakes out. It really does." (4)

Supervising Females Is Positive

Over half of the women interviewed stressed that supervising females was both positive and negative. One leader described supervising females as a double-edged sword with some females who are great and others who are petty. Three women described supervising females as "positive", "much more positive than supervising men" and "has provided me with great rewards".

Well, overall throughout my career with supervising women it has been positive. Well, positive. (5)

It has been really positive.... I think we relate well to each other very well. You know, I knew a lot of the women before because I had worked with them and that makes a difference. They are easy to relate to, I mean we can find things in common. And I was thinking about that and I was thinking is it family? Is it traditional women's stuff? And in some cases, it is. (8)

I think that you have opportunities to work with some really great women and some people that you are just proud to be associated with... It might

just be the friendship level. I think you can develop friendships as well as... I mean it takes a special kind of friendship to be able to separate that when you need to take care of what has to be done but I find that I get good ideas, I enjoy being able to stimulate good ideas and giving somebody some leeway to say what you can do with this and they do something really great with it and I feel like I really accomplished something. Some women I find very refreshing. They energize you, they stimulate your leadership abilities and they kind of stretch you and challenge you and you know that you have to stay ahead of that. (6)

My experience has been positive. It has changed over the years, I think. ... Philosophically, I first started supervising young women who were in either career building phases of their life, who were in graduate school who were ambitious and at that point I dealt less with, I think, family issues and community issue than I see now. I also think times have changed. When I was an employee and I got pregnant, I had six weeks and I had to come back and that was my boss's decision. Now, there is the Family Medical Leave Act so it changes the perspective, you see those changes in values in the way you supervise. (2)

Well in my career, where I am right now I feel that I am fortunate in that the dynamics are very positive. I don't know if it is the fact that I have matured or it just happens to be the personalities of those involved (chuckle) or maybe a little bit of both. But I do have some memories in the past, for example, supervising women, women in the past has been a lot more challenging than what I am experiencing right now. And you know, quite frankly I had not thought about it but I am wondering if it is a fact of the combination of my own maturity as a supervisor, the level of supervision; it is more of a directing kind of, leading, enabling, type of activity more than it is directing, if you will, or if it is the personalities involved. And so, I would say that in terms of supervising women overall, my experiences have been much more positive than supervising men. (5)

Supervising Females Is Negative

Three of the participants described working with female subordinates as having a negative or down side.

...and then there on the other side of the coin and I find this is areas where there is, where there are a lot of women who work together. And sometimes it has to do with the leadership and what is fostered and what is not but they can be very petty. They can be very territorial, they can be. You just wonder if they have enough to do because they get upset over

what seems to be the littlest reasons. ... Reassurance. They (female subordinates) want to be, they need to be told, what a good job they are doing and lots of strokes. They need to be told that they are doing a good job and that they have done what you have asked them to do. Men don't need that as much. They want to know that they are doing a good job but you don't have to tell them ten times. (6)

I don't know whether this is women in terms of competitiveness. It seems to me that I find women more jealous, particularly in any sort of pecking order like, well a kind of who's in charge of something. I have a simple example in my office. I contributed to a silent auction on the campus here, which I do frequently and what I bought was passes to _____ (a community event). And I had four of them and I am single and so I had one staff person, I have people with very different needs. I have always given away a lot of my tickets. There is a woman who is single and one with a couple of children and another woman who has a little guy. And so I asked this one person because I thought her kids were about at the age that I thought they would enjoy going to watch. Oh it just went (she gestures like an explosion). So, finally I called the person at the _____ and said can you just give me five more tickets and I'll just take care of it (laughter). This was probably about a ten-hour about who is mad at who and "you didn't have to give me tickets because it wouldn't matter to me." But yet everybody takes them and this is just over, you know... But if you could sit down and say well you got the concert tickets a week ago and I hired your kid to take in my paper when I was gone. (3)

One of the things that I would probably not say publicly and maybe this isn't a question you would ever ask your female supervisors but I think there is probably a level at sometimes that they wished they were supervising men because it seems easier. Not that they are more effective or efficient but boy the energy, time and maintenance can be tough. (2)

In summary, some participants in the study found working with female subordinates as both a positive and negative experience while most found working with women to be a positive experience. In addition to the strengths of subordinates mentioned above, most of the leaders enjoy the personal relationships they develop with their female subordinates. The downside of working with female subordinates includes petty and jealous behaviors as well as the time, energy, and maintenance needed to sustain the relationships.

Relationships with Female Subordinates Are Flexible, Informal, Critical, and Complicated

Supervisors described a complicated web of relationships with female subordinates. While supervisors enjoy the informal, flexible nature of their relationship with subordinates, they also describe them as complicated. Attention to relationships appears to be critical for successful supervisor-subordinate collaboration.

Flexible and Informal Relationships

Almost all of the women mentioned the informal nature of supervising women. They described personal, after-hours relationships, getting to know subordinates personally, and the flexibility needed in their business interactions with females. They provided numerous examples of how this phenomenon differs with male subordinates.

A year ago, I had about five deans, pretty evenly split between men and women. There were times when the females that I supervised, and I am just realizing why this occurred, as I am answering my question all at once, we may or may not keep the appointment based on what we needed to have a conversation about. I wouldn't dare not have the appointment with the men colleagues. They would come in very deliberately with an agenda and all this listed. And I was just thinking why that probably occurred. Often times when I was in the hallway, I would have conversations with the women in various different places as I am sure men have with men. And often times the work was done along the way.... You know, you tend to gather in places and often times you do business there. ... There doesn't seem to be as many structured lines of responsibility. ... There is a comfort level, I think, that even though we know we have separate responsibilities that we cover. And maybe that is how we have grown up. We have always covered for one another. (1)

Well, one thing that occurs to me is that my experience in supervising women is that you really do need to open it up a bit in terms of flexibility. Mainly because unfortunately, the experiences I have had here in this institution; we have had many women who are primary caretakers of the family and their families are getting sick and they themselves are getting sick. We have had unfortunately, a great number of women who have

fallen, who have breast cancer and there is a woman who had to retire recently, actually two for medical reasons, they had cancer, one colon and the other had a brain tumor (5)

As I think about how I relate to the women and if I relate differently to the men. And probably... But you can just tell that that is not really what they (the males) like to talk about. Whereas, five, ten minutes into my other meetings we are talking about parenting and then we get to the business part and not quite as much as with the men.... Like one (male subordinate) has an outline. And a couple of times that he didn't have his outline it about drove him nuts because he didn't have his outline. I didn't ask them to do that.... One (female subordinate) is very linear; she has to do that so she stays on task. We don't always stay on that but she is the only one. Other people (women) just jot notes in their little book or, "Yeah, here is what I want to talk about" so they get it off the board or they just remember or as we talk they come up. It is much more laid back. (8)

Actually the men were more organized. They'll come in with their agenda. ... Actually here and one guy at _____ (name of institution), they came in they had their list and they are all typed out and it was like a true agenda. Where the women are not that formal, they are not typed out and some don't even have a list at all. Maybe men, and maybe it is because they have a female supervisor they feel that they have to be more formal. And women don't feel that. (6)

I mean truly these men would come in and I had three of them who came in with their agendas, which I appreciated it because it certainly kept us on track and they were all business-like and I needed to check on this, this, this, and this. And just extremely structured and it was almost like I had to say, can we have any fun here? I mean they would have no need to have a personal conversation. (1)

I find that I have to get to the bottom line a lot quicker than if I were sitting down with a women that I was supervising. My meetings with the women that I supervise tend to go on a lot longer than with the meetings with the men simply because the way we are communicating. (5)

Relationships are Critical

Five of the 8 women talked about how critical the relationship component of the supervisor-subordinate dynamic is to successful supervision. The picture they paint is a complex one, with female subordinates needing different things from the relationship

with their supervisor. And they reported the complications that can arise from such focus on relationships.

My experience with women is that there is an investment, particularly in relationship building that is critical to building success in the supervisory relationship. And it is different for different women. Some women want more of that relationship not related to the job and some people can tolerate less. Probably that is where I see the contrast between men and women. I don't see a lot of women who desire to be all of, business-like and professional. That the personal contact is critical, I think to them, but in terms of what I would call maintenance of the person's self-concept and performance and so on there is a range for women. (2)

... I think that I spend more time with women than I do with men. They seem to need to discuss it more; they seem to need to touch base more. (6)

I do believe that women need, women do desire to have strong interactions and human relationship kind of things, behaviors become very, very important. (7)

I think I get, I tend to know a lot more and tend to get involved with what is going on with their work or with their work environment with women than I do with the men. ... I don't know if it just happens to be the fact, especially with the women I supervise, I have a real bond there where as there is not as much of a personal bond with men. (5)

And building relationships with the consensus, the best way to do that is to have relationships. So, I would much rather spend time with people, get to know that and then be able to work one on one. Then when there is a conflict or problem then I feel like we can resolve it a lot quicker then if I don't have that relationship and then I try to teach other people how to build those relationships. (8)

And I think that my relationship with my assistant and then I would look at a male colleague and his relationship with his assistant, very different again. ... And what I felt really was that the person I could share complete confidence with and she truly knew the ins and outs of my office and she could have spoken for me on any issue because you sometimes need that person. _____ (her new assistant) and I are fairly new at working together because we have only been seven months, eight months and my anticipation is that I will allow her to know as much about my working style and me so she has that some kind of comfort level. (1)

Complications Due to Importance of Relationships

Given the importance of relationships to women, the participants described how complications in these relationships arise.

Well, you know in theory women are more nurturing and build more relationships so it is impossible to connect with somebody and then step back all the time. We make connections and sometimes that can actually complicate our lives. I mean one of the things that I worked with some of the young female managers has been establishing parameters around relationship building in supervisory relationships that is going to be detrimental or lead people to believe that there is a lack of objectivity and fairness or even to put you in a difficult situation. ... And some women will need relationship building in the sense of the work related relationship. ... They will deliver information that is, that they may be very angry about and then they will find a way to mitigate it so that the relationship is still there. Like, "Susan what you did caused me, but you know, maybe next time." They are busy building their relationship while they are trying to resolve it at the same time. (2)

And I think the ability to separate; you know what we always hear about our own kids, separate out your love for them from their behavior and I am not sure that we as women are always real clear about that. That anytime that somebody criticizes our behavior I think we translate that into we're bad people. (3)

In summary, relationships with female subordinates appear to be at the heart of effective and satisfying supervisor-subordinate interaction. The leaders seem to marvel at the flexibility and informality of their relationships with female subordinates. They described meetings "along the way," in the hallway, or in other informal, non-office settings. Some talked about the fact that sometimes they could cancel a standing meeting with a female subordinate because they had covered their important business in another setting. Several said that they could not and would not cancel a standing meeting with male subordinates. When the leaders did meet with their female subordinates, they talked about the length of time they spent in such meetings. In contrast, meetings with male subordinates were quicker and to the point, often guided by agendas supplied by the

subordinate. The leaders revealed that investment in time and effort in their relationship was critical to successful communication and performance. In some cases, female subordinates desired communication about personal issues and in other cases about professional concerns. Participants repeatedly pointed out that female subordinates valued the relationships and the commensurate time and communication that accompanied their attention. They pointed out that male subordinates seemed less concerned with the relationship and more concerned with the “bottom line” or business at hand. Because of the high stakes associated with relationships, sometimes complications arose. Several leaders described the importance of separating the business from personal aspects of the relationship with subordinates. One leader talked about the consequences associated with being busy off campus and absent from the office and the subsequent toll it took on the relationship with her subordinates.

Conflict with Females Is Difficult and Time Consuming

When asked about any conflict with female subordinates, almost all leaders indicated that conflict with female subordinates was difficult and time consuming. Some felt that females prefer to avoid conflict. They talked about how hard it is for females to “let go” in conflict situations and how important communication is in the resolution process.

Conflict Is Not Easy for Women

There is widespread agreement amongst participants that conflict between women is difficult and painful.

I think it (conflict) is difficult. And the reason I think it is difficult is because I don't think women are particularly good at confronting conflict. I think that part of that is out of their kind of background. You don't get angry, you don't say bad things and that is not very feminine and so I think it is difficult. I think the other thing that is a little bit problematic about women that I also think is different about men is that I don't think women let go of stuff as well so that conflict can sort of bubble and sometimes I think it is sort of like a boil and sometimes women sort of lance it to let the pain out and they never really attend to healing it. They don't let go. (3)

Women like to avoid conflict and I don't know that routinely everyone does. In fact, it is kind of interesting that if a woman, when I look around at the people I supervise, some people will be aggressive or more outspoken. Her own gender-group can kind of turn on her because you are not behaving the same way other women behave. But most women at the supervisory level have difficulty dealing with conflict and really need to be mentored and even role-played through. ... I remember being interviewed for a position and someone asked me what would happen if two employees, and they used female employees as the example, didn't get along in the office and they just didn't get along. They were picking at each other's work and they had to work together. What would you do? And my response was that I would probably talk with each one individually and try to determine what was at stake here. What were the real issues versus the behavior? Eventually, you are probably going to need to have both individuals come in and talk together and have a better sense then. And finally, one of them questioned, "And what if that doesn't work?" Well for me, there is a level, perhaps not typical of women, where I have to say, "This is a job. You do not need to love each other. You must be professional in the office and we cannot accept any other behavior. So, if a behavior is exhibited that is unprofessional and inappropriate, no matter what, we will deal with that behavior. And they looked at me like, well, women don't go that far; they are just going to keep negotiating until it dies or somebody quits. And I do think that women can learn to force an issue to a level of professional but that is not where they start in their conflict. Most people perceive them as being more petty or emotional but again I think that is the whole relationship issue. And if the relationship is damaged or there is a blow up then it is hard for them to work along side each other. But there are places and times, where I've also learned, especially with women, that this can't be fixed. (2)

I think in terms of conflict with women I am supervising the experience is (long pause) it is more painful in the sense that there is a process. There is a disagreement, reaction to whatever is the conflict. But, so in a sense it just takes longer and I find myself really wanting to get at the root of it, yet, again some of these women have been personal friends and so it is

double, you know, and I work with them in other circles and so it is different. (5)

What I find, well first of all, particularly (name of a department she supervises) because they have been together for a while but there has been a lot of changes in that group, and that is where the majority of women are, they are all women except one. Lots of conflict, especially when people left and people came in, that trust wasn't there and (name of predecessor) really didn't do a lot with helping them with that. Sometimes what male bosses don't understand about women is that you have to build those relationships so it has taken awhile and they still don't like or trust each other all the time....I think it is the way we are socialized. I mean I see that with having two girls growing up. And they get in tiffs with their little friends and it would be that way for weeks whereas my son, they might get in a fist fight blow up fight and the next day or even within hours they are friends again. They just let it go and I think they are taught to do it more in sports. ... But women just have to hold onto it and personalize it and it is hard for them to let things go. (8)

I think I would be foolish to say that struggle is easy; obviously conflict is one of those struggles that are difficult. I tend to invest a lot of time and energy with people that work with me and that is really important to me. When something goes wrong, whether it's a conflict be that we are going in a different direction, be that a conflict where you didn't do what I asked you to do and this is an embarrassment whatever it is, it hits you in a couple of ways. Not only is it an issue of how you are going to change the way you are thinking at this point in time because I am concerned about the performance and let's talk about that but the other issue I deal with is that I tend to take it personally. (1)

Whereas, I think that for a large number, but not all women tend to hold it in until they can't hold it anymore until it just explodes and sometimes it implodes and that is really dangerous, but it is more of a crescendo. And while they won't confront you face to face, and very forcefully, there will be (laughter) a confrontation but it will be a lot more subtle and sometimes you won't see it coming. (7)

Conflict with Men Is Different

Conflict with men was described as being different from conflict with women.

With men, I find that the conflict can be there, there can be a disagreement but the very next minute it is ok. ... Yes, it is over. I find that I have to be more astute, I guess or hone into if I am having a conflict with a women

really work at figuring out what it is, what happened and how to fix it and I don't know that that really shows up that much in the men. (5)

And so we disagree and so we had a misunderstanding. Ok, you talk it out and get on your way. I don't think that women do that as well as men do. Men see remarkably able to do it, it seems to me. (3)

...most men would want to sit down which we know about men, and "Let's just work it out." And then they leave, it is ok. It's done. We made an agreement. Women still tend to hold on and personalize it too much sometimes. (8)

Well, this may be one of those differences. My experience has been that women have a tendency to be not as "in your face" confrontation as men. Men will come in and (yelp!) get it out on the table and it will be over and you can deal with it and then move on. (7)

In summary, most, if not all participants talked about how difficult conflict is with other women. Two leaders felt that women prefer to avoid conflict. The importance of relationships between women was mentioned as one of the reasons why women have difficulty dealing with conflict with other women. Several participants described the difficulty women face in "letting go" after a conflict. Many of the leaders described the time and energy needed to resolve conflict between women. Conflict with men was viewed as easier since with males the conflict is discussed, an agreement is made, and both parties move on.

Differences between Supervising Support Staff and Professional Staff

Four of the women leaders articulated the differences between supervising support staff and supervising professional staff.

Differences Between the Two

Support staff members are described as needing more and different supervision than professional staff. Professional staff are viewed as having more leeway and flexibility in their work and more perquisites than support staff.

...I think it is different for classified than it is for professional. I felt the interpersonal relationships of women in classified positions and not just at this institution, this is the third university I have worked at, are just a dynamic in my mind that are all to their own. I don't think I have ever well understood that. They seem to have, in some ways, want more supervision or more intervention from me, or more refereeing, or more support or more something than in my mind ought to be necessary. Now I don't find that with the professional women I work with. ...I believe that women generally have more problems with other women having power than with men having power. I think I see it more often in classified. I don't see it as often in my professionals... sometimes I think it is about choices that people have made in their lives. And they see that other people's choices have either placed them in a position of more resources, more power, more freedom, more I think when you get a position I'm in, more with perq's with the position. ...And so I think that jealousy starts to creep for reasons of what other people have that I don't have whether that is power or, and I think that you see more of it in the classified staff. Part of it is lower pay, less status. Universities are hard places because professionals make more money and they get far more perq's and then they see them waltz in and out of life, go get their hair cut or go to the dentist and it is hard. (3)

...there is more a difference on the part of the classified staff than the professional staff rather than a gender difference so I think that the support staff folks find it more amazing that I can make a tough decision about somebody, a job that is going away or something like that than a professional position that is occupied by a female or a male. (4)

The other piece of that is that as I am thinking of the people that I have supervised, the women especially, there is another little nuance if you will in terms of what level you are supervising. For example, in higher ed we have the exempt staff and then we have the classified staff and there is a big difference in terms of, well there shouldn't be, but there is a big difference in terms of standards or in terms of accountability. And I have to admit there is probably a little bit of difference in terms of my interaction. ...For example, the exempt staff, and I'll take the work I am doing now, with the exempt staff, the staff that I am supervising, especially the women, one is an associate VP and one is an assistant to in a

certain area. Those women I probably do more of guidance. It is more of, rather than directly supervising day-to-day activities, it is more of a general type of supervision mainly working with them rather than having them work for – that type of thing. Whereas, the classified person who reports to me, we do lay out a lot of the work, the standards, the goals, ways of achieving and there are for example, a lot of evaluations and the progress that she makes is very much laid out in a performance plan if you will. And while I have performance plans for the exempt staff, there is I think a lot more flexibility and probably more leeway. (5)

In an area that I indirectly supervised, and maybe it has to do with, well obviously it has to do with maturity level, but how professional they are and what they are doing like, everybody is professional but in my lower classified positions I found that people are more myopic in their view about what they are doing and who should be involved and who shouldn't and who they interact with and who they don't and what upsets them and what doesn't and stuff. I found that to be the petty area. I pretty much did not see that on the professional level. ... I honestly think it has to do with maturity. I think it has to do with people being very insecure about what they are doing or themselves. I mean if you are confident in what you are doing you don't get pulled into those kinds of like somebody did something. ... I still come back to the directors maybe it is education. Maybe, they were more educated than the other women were and maybe going through the process of education helps you mature and helps you figure out what is important and what's not and to prioritize what you are upset about and not so territorial about what you do and how you do it and whether you do accept the challenges or whether you do not accept the challenges. (6)

I think there is a lot of need for anyone who supervises support staff to really provide recognition of the fact that those individuals are front line and they take the brunt of fielding calls and complaints and dealing with the public and developing internal constituents and external constituents and do so for significantly less pay... And because many of that group are females, I think sometimes they get over used or misused or overlooked so I think it is important to make sure that they get recognition as a class.... Professionals, I think are a little bit more inclined to say, well that is part of my job, you know I am dedicated and that comes with the territory and in leadership 101 you learn to do x, y, and z. (7)

Here (in her office suite) is a whole different ballgame because there are three and because we have had some turnover in (title of positions) you know we have had a lot of change over the past couple of years and the dynamics between them (the support staff) is really interesting. They clearly see that they are not equal and so I feel we have to do a lot to make them feel important; to not just dump stuff on them and I have always felt

that way having been a work-study kind of staff person. ... So if I have copies to make, I'll make copies if I have the time. Because it seems stupid to me that if I have the time that I go out there and ask them to stop what they are doing and make copies when I can do it. But I have been told at times, by them, "Would you let us do that because you do too much and that is our job." I would be so conscious of not wanting to overwork them or make them feel too subordinate so I would do it myself... Part of it, I think, is the skill level. They don't know how to resolve conflicts so they will get mad (at the other support staff) and go tell the office manager or they'll send emails and I mean they are right there together. They will send a barrage of emails sort of complaining about the other person instead of getting up and talking to them. But I think when you feel that you don't have the power, the only thing you have control over is your space and what you do that you have become very territorial over that. ... they can get so petty as to when somebody is two minutes late from lunch and it becomes this huge thing and the rest of us, the professional sit around and say, "Why is this such a big deal?" (8)

In summary, in describing the differences between supervising classified and professional staff, the women leaders noted that classified staff seems to need more time and attention from supervisors. One leader believes that the support staff compare the resources they have in their job (kind of computer, access to printing, pay, etc) to what other staff have and, at times, jealousy and pettiness arise between support staff. Professional staff has more perquisites and flexibility in their jobs and this fact may cause resentment on the part of support staff. One leader described her professional staff as requiring "guidance" rather than direct day-to-day supervision needed for the support staff.

Summary of the Essence of the Phenomenon

In summary, the women leaders described female subordinates as capable and hard working. They felt that their female subordinates had greater sensitivity and a higher need to please others than their male subordinates. Some leaders felt that female

subordinates actually take on too much work and how such work could take a toll on the subordinates. The participants found their experience with supervising females to be both positive and negative. The leaders enjoyed the personal relationships with and opportunity to mentor their subordinates. Some also found negative aspects of supervision including pettiness, jealousy, and territoriality among female subordinates. Almost all of the women leaders described their supervisory relationships with their female subordinates to be personal and flexible. Meetings with female subordinates were casual with no formal agenda, unlike most of their meetings with male subordinates. The leaders recognized that female subordinates like attention from the leaders and highly value the human dimension of the relationship. A number of women leaders are particularly proud of their trusting relationships with their female support staff members. Although the leaders recognize the importance of the relationships with their female subordinates, some lamented the time and energy needed to maintain relationships with the female subordinates. A few even said that it was probably easier to supervise men. Conflict with female subordinates was reported as being painful and difficult by most of the participants. Many described female's tendency to avoid conflict by not dealing with their feelings and concerns openly. When conflict was dealt with, it tended to require lots of communication. The women leaders described females as reluctant to let go of conflicts unlike their male counterparts who were quick to move on after difficult interactions with others. The importance and value of relationships between women was named as a reason why conflict is so difficult for women to resolve amongst themselves. The participants in the study articulated the difference they experienced between supervising female support staff and female professional staff. The difference was in the

amount of time and attention needed to spend on support staff including goal setting, evaluation, helping them to resolve disputes amongst themselves, and other day-to-day type supervisory activities. On the other hand, professional staff needed less guidance and did not seem to get caught up in some of the petty, competitive type behavior found by some leaders amongst support staff. Several leaders offered concern and understanding for the support staff describing them as underpaid, overworked, under appreciated, and having less flexibility and power than the professional staff. These same leaders demonstrated a desire to reach out and reward and support the staff whenever possible.

Conclusion of Findings

These findings reflect the outcome of a phenomenological study of 8 women leaders in higher education. The study focused on their experiences in supervising women. The findings include two groups of themes, phenomena related to understanding the context of women's leadership experience and analysis of the essence of the phenomenon. In the process of talking about what it is like to supervise women, the women described contextual themes related to their leadership experience including how they supervise and how women relate to one another. The examination of these issues resulted in the identification of three themes that were useful in appreciating the context within which the participants experienced supervising women. These included women's leadership, supervision, and women can be hard on women.

The primary themes reflect the essence of the phenomenon or answer the grand tour question, "What is it like to supervise women?" In answer to this question, five themes emerged from the voices of the women participants in the study. The five themes

were female subordinates are capable and work hard; supervising women is both positive and negative; relationships with female subordinates are flexible, informal, critical, and complicated; conflict with females is difficult and time consuming; and there is a difference between supervising support staff and professional staff.

The two sets of themes weave an intricate picture of how the women leaders view themselves and view their female subordinates. In several of the interviews, the leaders made reference to “having never really thought about this issue before,” or to “now that I am talking about this I am realizing for the first time that...,” which is an interesting phenomenon in and of itself. Women have not really talked to each other about what it is like to work with and supervise other women. This study has given some women the opportunity to do that and has provided the reader with an opportunity to hear what that experience is like.

CHAPTER V: FINDINGS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Introduction

This final chapter is separated into three sections. The first section, Summary of Study, describes the purpose, design, methodology, procedures, and data analysis used in the study. The second section, Overview of Findings, describes and discusses the context themes (themes related to understanding the context of women leaders' experiences) and essence themes (themes associated with of the essence of the phenomenon). The second section also ties the findings of this study to the current research and ends with a summary of how the two groups of themes, context and essence, interrelate. The third section, Conclusions and Recommendations for Further Research, delineates the researcher's conclusion of the study and suggests areas for future research related.

Summary of Study

The purpose of this qualitative study was to explore the experience of women leaders in higher education who supervise women. A phenomenological design was selected because of the researcher's desire to hear the voices of the participants as they described their life experiences with female subordinates and to better understand the meaning of their experiences.

Eight women were selected to participate in the study. Criteria used to select the participants included holding a line position: Dean, Vice Chancellor, Vice President, Assist Vice President, Provost, Chancellor or President; employed in an institution of higher education including community college, college, or university within the Front Range of Colorado; and presently or formerly supervised women. The participants were initially contacted by telephone or electronic mail. A letter explaining the research study was provided to each participant. Each participant also signed a consent form that had been approved by the Colorado State University Human Subjects Research Committee. Interviews were scheduled at a time convenient for the participant and conducted in the participant's office, and each interview was tape-recorded. The researcher transcribed the audiotapes verbatim.

Three components of phenomenological inquiry were followed in this study including epoche, phenomenological reduction, and structural synthesis (Patton, 1990). The goal of the data analysis was to capture the quality and texture of the participant's experience (Willig, 2001). The overall approach to the data analysis included description, analysis, and interpretation of the data (Wolcott, 1994). The data were carefully and systematically coded. A story, summarizing the key components of the interview, was written for each participant. Themes were identified first within the participant's interview then across all participants' interviews.

Overview of Findings

In each of the interviews the participants described experiences that answered the research question, "What has been your experience in supervising women?" Five essence

themes emerged from the analysis of the interview data that describe the essence of the women leader's experience in supervising women. These themes include Female Subordinates Are Capable and Work Hard; Supervising Females Is both Positive and Negative; Relationships with Female Subordinates Is Flexible, Informal, Critical, and Complicated; Conflict with Females Is Difficult and Time Consuming; and Differences Exist between Supervising Support Staff and Professional Staff.

The participants also described experiences that relate to an overall understanding of who they are as women leaders. These experiences are described below as phenomena related to understanding the context of women leaders' experiences. Three context themes emerged from the analysis of the data. These themes include Women's Leadership, Supervision, and Women Can Be Hard on Women.

First is a description and discussion of the three themes that relate to understanding the context of women's experience. Next is a description and discussion of the five themes that reflect the essence of the experience for the women leaders in supervising women. Finally, discussion of how the two groups of themes are connected reveals a deeper understanding of the participant's experience in supervising women.

Context Themes

Phenomena Related to Understanding the Context of Women Leaders Experience

In the context three themes mentioned below, the participants reflected on the context of their experiences as leaders including their views of what make women leaders successful, their own leadership and supervisory style, worries about failure, and how women work together.

Women's Leadership

The first theme, Women's Leadership, has three significant components. These components include female leadership style, participant's own leadership style, and successful women leaders. With reference to whether there was a female leadership style, some of the participants thought there were distinct female leadership traits, a view supported by others in the literature (Frye, 1980; Loden, 1985; Pringle & Collins, 1998; Tannen, 1990; Velivis, 1990). Greater communication and attention to the human dimensions of relationships were noted as common female leadership traits. Several participants also mentioned that women leaders tended to focus on the big picture better than their male counterparts. This finding is similar to Chapman's (1997) description of strengths of female internal auditors. She believes women have a global perspective in the workplace derived from their "diffuse awareness" or ability to see the "big picture."

Other participants were uncertain about a definite female leadership style. This view is supported by Bynum's (2000) findings in her study of female leadership characteristics. Participants in her study did not agree on the leadership characteristics that they felt were more often seen in women than in men. In this present study, many comments were made about how women leaders are now blending both traditional feminine and traditional masculine qualities into a combined or androgynous type leadership style.

The literature also supports the emergence of an androgynous leadership style (Applebaum & Shapiro, 1993; Bejoian, 1989; Cooper & Kleiner, 1993; Fateri & Kleiner, 1992; Nelton, 1991; Pugliano, 1994; Sargent, 1981). Although there was widespread

agreement among the participants in this study about the positive movement toward an androgynous leadership style, the point was made that women leaders have to be careful not to act “too” masculine, as that may cause others to view them negatively. Pringle (1998) believes that the research suggests that subordinates prefer women leaders when they embody a more traditional feminine approach including more person-oriented or relational behaviors. In a study on sex role behavior and leadership, it was found that subordinates prefer their leaders to display traditional sex role or androgynous behaviors (Bushardt, Fowler, & Caveny, 1987). In a study with similar findings, Griffin (1992) measured perceptions about male and female managers who used either authoritative or participative leadership style. She found that males were rated more positively when they were authoritative and females were rated more positively when they were participative. The leaders in Griffin’s study were also viewed more positively when they used a leadership style that was typical of and consistent with their gender.

Looking at a possible component of androgynous leadership, Schullery (1998) found in a survey of 386 full-time female employees that a moderate level of argumentativeness is optimum for women interested in higher supervisory positions. She contrasted her finding to the literature that states that argumentativeness (thought to be more of a male behavior) is desirable and constructive and linked to better decisions and enhanced credibility for leaders. Schullery postulated that research on women’s assertiveness had shown that an assertive speaking style is not always received well by others. Therefore, when women use an assertive or moderate level of argumentativeness they must do so with care. Many women leaders experience this same type of dilemma when they must employ some traditional male leadership qualities, like

argumentativeness, to be successful yet if they act “too male” they find others view them negatively.

This double bind that women find themselves in is addressed in the contemporary literature (Cox, 1996; Duff & Cohen, 1993; Heim & Murphy, 2001). Duff sums it up by saying:

In the past, many of us women have found ourselves caught in the conundrum created when our differences are not honored. If we acted like men, men often felt threatened by our directness and competitiveness, and many women found us alienating and difficult to work with. On the other hand, if we acted like women – seeming reluctant to play power politics and insisting on bringing relationship-based values into an objective, competitive, “male” workplace – men found our “feminine” behaviors a sign of weakness, and women who emulated the male style felt uncomfortable (Duff & Cohen, 1993, pp. 14-15).

In a Duff and Cohen (1993) study of women who work together, they found that conflicts arose when women had expectations of other women that they did not have for men.

They also found that women made allowances for men when they acted differently than women, but when women acted differently it made the women uncomfortable. Cox (1996) expressed very similar sentiments:

Women can gain support [from other women] by being victims, by showing weakness and distress. But those women who find this [acting weak] uncomfortable have difficulty when we come across as strong. This sets up for us the dilemma of being neither acceptable “female” in style, nor being male and therefore acceptably strong (Cox, 1996, pp. 144-145).

A number of researchers describe the double bind that contemporary women leaders face (Cox, 1996; Duff & Cohen, 1993; Sawyer, 1996), not unlike the sentiment expressed by one of the leaders in this study.

With regard to their own leadership styles, the participants in this study described themselves as informal, accessible, communicative, empowering, collaborative, fair, and

willing to listen to others. They also described themselves as liking teamwork and being consensus builders. These self-described qualities are commonly referred to in the literature on female leadership styles (Ali, 1994; Griggs, 1989; Jablonski, 1992; Joyner, 1998; Rosener, 1990; Velivis, 1990).

Almost all of the women made mention of what it takes to be successful as a women leader in today's higher education environment. Specifically, they talked about the expectations that others had of them, some relating directly to their gender. This same perspective was supported by Morrison, et al's (1992) female leadership work on the glass ceiling. She found that in order to approach the highest levels, women were expected to have more strengths and fewer faults than their male counterparts. Swiss's (1996) research agreed noting 68 percent of the participants in her study indicated that they felt they were held to a higher standard than their male counterparts. The participants in this study felt that, because they were women, they were expected to listen and reach out more than their male predecessors or counterparts. Several mentioned how surprised others were when they acted tough or handled very difficult or contentious decisions well.

Worries about failure were mentioned by over half of the participants. Several mentioned situations where they had failed at something related to their job and how bad it made them feel. Three made surprising mention of a former high profile women leader (not a participant in this study) who was viewed as unsuccessful in her top-level university position. This particular high profile leader's perceived public failure seemed to both sadden and frustrate the participants. The women leaders seem to connect the difficulty women have with failure to women's desire for perfection and to deeply rooted

feelings of self-esteem. In her provocative book, *Leading Women*, Cox (1996) examined the attitudes and behaviors of women in relationship to being leaders. She spoke plainly about the issue of women and failure:

We need to determine what continues to go wrong so we can try again without the patterns being repeated. This is not so easy because many of the women who have “failed” assume they were at fault. This sense of inadequacy is reinforced by the double standards set for women and men in senior positions. For example, criticisms of personal styles and interpersonal skills are applied to senior women in ways they are never applied to men (Cox, 1996, p. 63).

While women generally tend to accept blame and guilt more easily than men, it is particularly painful in this area because we are trained to believe that failure in interpersonal relations, even at work, is proof we are indeed unlovable (Cox, 1996, p. 133).

The participants touted the importance for women leaders to know themselves well, including their strengths and weaknesses, and to be true to one’s values whenever possible. The importance of self-knowledge and its tie to quality performance was underscored in McAvoy’s (2002) qualitative study of leaders. The study examined the influences that reinforced the application of self-knowledge to leaders development.

Supervision

There were four components to the participants’ discussion of supervision in general. These included supervisory style, empowering subordinates, paying attention to and communicating with subordinates, and the challenges of supervision. Overall, the women described their supervision as fair, consistent, clear, and focused on collaboration. Several described their efforts to serve as a mentor to their female subordinates by providing them with sincere feedback and supporting and promoting them when possible.

Half of the participants made reference to empowering their subordinates. They used phrases, like “spreading around my power” and “distributing my power,” when referring to what it was like to have power “over” other women. This reference to empowering others is commonly found in the literature regarding women leaders (Helgeson, 1995; Joyner, 1998; Pasquale, 1995) One leader, who did not even like the idea of having power, was coached by her mentor to use power for good, not evil. In Heim and Murphy’s (2001) book, *In the Company of Women*, they quoted Estrich on this very phenomenon:

It’s hard to find a woman who says, “I want power,” Estrich notes. “You find these powerful women forever explaining how they aren’t really powerful, or they don’t want power, or they don’t want *more* power” (Heim & Murphy, 2001, p. 64).

Many of the women in this present study found their position and power valuable for mentoring female subordinates. Perhaps, this use of power seemed much more acceptable to them because they were using power to help others rather than for their own good.

Three of the women leaders made reference to the importance of staying in touch with their subordinates through regular communication and by paying attention to their employees through visits and listening. Rosener’s (1990) findings agree with this phenomenon when she referred specifically to women leaders:

Sharing power and information accomplishes several things. It creates loyalty by signaling to coworkers and subordinates that they are trusted and their ideas respected. It also sets an example for other people and therefore can enhance the general flow of communication (Rosener, 1990, p. 123).

Morrill (1997) found that high quality conversations on a variety of topics, in a variety of contexts, had a major influence on the nature of relationships between supervisors and

subordinates. Those who shared meaningful interaction developed relationships characterized by higher levels of trust and support.

The leaders in this study felt that by getting to know their employees and by paying attention to their needs, they could depend on their subordinates' hard work in return. This belief on the part of the women leaders seems to ring true when considering the results of Shih's (2000) research on gender and supervisor-subordinate relationships. He found that female employees in clerical or support positions were more satisfied with their jobs when their supervisors offered them communication and support.

Many of the participants in the study made reference in some way to the challenges of supervision with one leader summing it up by saying that "Supervision is harder than it looks." The participants were split over the challenge of supervising females with some saying it was harder than supervising males and some indicating it was easier. Two participants did not see much difference between supervising males and females. The supervisory challenges raised by women leaders varied. One mentioned how hard it was to supervise women at different stages in their lives, others mentioned the difficulty of balancing the needs of the individual with what is best for the institution, yet others talked about the unique challenges associated with ascension in the organization and supervising former peers.

Women Can Be Hard On Other Women

Some of the women leaders expressed the view that women can, at times, be hard on other women. Cox (1996) discussed this phenomenon directly:

The question of why women are so hard on other women has not received as much attention as our problems with men. I suggest it goes back to the

more restricted images with which we have to comply. We need to ask how women cope with women outside the roles of mother and sister, and maybe daughter. Not very well, is the conclusion of my reading and experience. What we have not yet identified are the problems women face both within peer groups and in recognizing other women as possible leaders (Cox, 1996, p. 148).

There were two key components to the leaders' references in this study to women's support for one another including zero sum game and moving up the ladder. Several of the leaders described how some females seem to view the potential for women's success as a zero sum game whereby one woman's success would somehow take away from another's. Competition and jealousy within female relationships were also mentioned as indicators of how women can be hard on other women. One leader associated this phenomenon with how some women have problems when other women have more power, something men traditionally have had. Another talked about how women readily compare themselves with other women. Heim and Murphy (2001) described this phenomenon by calling it the power dead-even rule:

For a positive relationship to be possible between two women, the self-esteem and power of one must be, in the perception of each woman, similar in weight to the self-esteem and power of the other. These essential elements must be kept "dead-even" (Heim & Murphy, 2001, p. 53).

Perhaps one reason that women can be hard on other women is because of how interdependent they are when working together. Women seem to have high expectations of the relationship component of the work experience with other women. When power alters the relationship and interdependency is impacted, women may worry about their status and the sustainability of the relationship.

There were differing views on the experience women have had with being supported by other women as they move up the success ladder. Some leaders felt much

support from other women with one describing how women had pushed and pulled for her. Others felt less support and more isolation from women in their organization. Duff and Cohen (1993) described how women sometimes make decisions at work that emphasize maintaining a relationship over making a career move or accepting promotion. She attributed this to women recognizing and desiring sameness as a basis for connection and therefore reluctant to want to move up the ladder thus making oneself different from other women. Heim and Murphy (2001) referred to what happens when women do not support other women when they are promoted as “commotion over promotion.” They said that when a woman is promoted other women rarely feel neutral on the matter. They explained that either they are really, truly happy for the individual or the promotion evokes feelings of betrayal and jealousy amongst the women left behind.

In summary, the participants reflected on feminine and androgynous leadership, issues associated with successful leadership, and concerns with failure. They also talked about their supervisory style, empowering subordinates and how women can be hard on other women. Understanding these aspects of the interviews with the participants provided insight into who they are as women leaders and provided valuable context for understanding their experiences supervising women.

Essence Themes

Essence of the Phenomenon, Women Who Supervise Women

In answer to the major research question, “What has been your experience in supervising women?” the 8 women leaders had much to say even though many of them revealed that they had never really thought about the question before the interview. The

essence of the phenomenon of women supervising women is captured in five themes. The five themes include Female Subordinates Are Capable and Work Hard; Supervising Females Is both Positive and Negative; Relationships with Female Subordinates Are Flexible, Informal, Critical, and Complicated; Conflict with Females Is Difficult and Time Consuming; and Differences between Supervising Support and Professional Staff. A summary of the findings for each theme is discussed below.

Female Subordinates Are Capable and Work Hard

This theme is broken down into two components: Females Are Capable and Females Work Hard. The women leaders in this study described their subordinates as capable, strong, cooperative, sensitive, diverse, and challenging. One leader said her female subordinates are no less linear, focused, or competitive than their male counterparts. Another called her female subordinates “phenomenal”. Not one leader referred to female subordinates as inferior in terms of their job performance. In a survey of over 500 women who were asked what they liked and did not like about working with women, 90 respondents mentioned competence as a positive factor in women working with women. They said that women do the job well, are conscientious, work hard, and can accomplish anything (Burke, 2000; Duff & Cohen, 1993).

Many leaders in this study worried about how hard their subordinates work. Half of the leaders described the toll that hard work has taken on their subordinates including references to increased serious illness among female employees, reluctance to take time off when needed, burn out, not saying “no” to too much work, and not taking care of themselves. One women leader related how all her female subordinates give back

vacation days at the end of the year, every year. When probed about why females work so hard, the leaders indicated that they thought females feared being viewed as weak or incompetent if they worked less.

Supervising Females Is both Positive and Negative

Over half the women leaders described their experience in supervising females as both positive and negative. One leader described supervising females as a “double-edged sword” with “some women are great and others are petty”. Three leaders described supervising females as very positive referencing how well women relate to and communicate with one another. Two leaders described personal friendships they had made while supervising women and how they spent time outside of work socializing with them.

Three of the leaders described a negative or downside to supervising females. One women leader described the energy, time, and maintenance required to supervise females and contrasted that to the lesser needs of male subordinates. Others referred to the distasteful petty and jealous behavior they see from primarily support staff subordinates.

Relationships with Female Subordinates Are Flexible, Informal, Critical, and Complicated

Women leaders described their relationships with female subordinates as very important. This theme is made up of three components including how relationships with subordinates are flexible and informal, as well as critical and complicated. Almost all of the leaders mentioned how informal, laid back, and flexible their day-to-day interactions

with subordinates were. They described personal, after-hours relationships, getting to know what motivates their subordinates, dependence on their subordinates, and the flexibility in how they worked with them. The leaders represented this particular phenomenon as clearly different from their experience with male subordinates. One women leader summed up the phenomenon by saying, "It is like the work is done along the way". The literature supported this view of flexibility as a feature of what happens when women work together (Pringle, 1998). The participants in this present study recounted the contrasts between the formality of meetings with men where agendas were common and business was the clear topic at hand with the talk in the hallway and the chatting about family that often occurred in meetings with females.

Five of the leaders talked about how critical the relationship component was when working with female subordinates. The participants described a complicated web of relationships between supervisor and subordinate, a concept supported in the literature (Clemons, 1998; Cox, 1996; Duff & Cohen, 1993; Helgeson, 1995; Smith, 2000). They relayed the different relationship needs of their subordinates depending on the stage in their career, and their openness to personal interaction, as well as the investment the leader needed to make in getting to know and supporting their female subordinates.

Given the importance of the relationship between women leaders and their subordinates, the participants described how sometimes complications arose. One leader talked about how she frequently zips through her subordinates' offices but how when she gets too busy to stop by, employees, especially women, get their feelings hurt and feel neglected. Another talked about the importance and difficulty of separating the subordinate's work performance from the personal relationship. Another remarked at

how women actually try to work on the relationship while they are in the middle of a difficult conflict, never losing sight of how important the relationship is to them. All of these examples reinforce the high value that women place on relationships with other women.

Conflict with Females Is Difficult and Time Consuming

When asked about conflict with females almost all of the leaders said that it was difficult, if not downright painful, and very time consuming. This particular theme had two distinct components including how conflict is not easy for women but also how vastly different conflict was with men. Many of the leaders viewed women as preferring to avoid conflict with other women, a concept that was supported in some of the literature (McQueen, 1997). McQueen summed her views of women and conflict by saying:

Most people do not like conflict, especially women. Women have been programmed to avoid conflict, and are used to being nurturing and caring but not assertive (McQueen, 1997, p. 22).

One leader in this study said that she thought girls were taught not to get angry and say bad things because it was not feminine to act that way. The finding of women avoiding conflict with other women was referred to in a study of gender and conflict resolution where female subordinates used compromise, soothing, and confrontation when dealing with male supervisors but did not use the confrontation piece with women supervisors (Zammuto, London, & Rowland, 1979). Several women in this study vividly described the tendency for females to hold in conflict until it erupts. Moore (1999) attributed women's fear of conflict to worries about jeopardizing relationships with other women. She described how important it is for women leaders to learn how to confront and resolve

conflicts. She gave conflict a positive spin by saying that it can enhance creativity and allows for better solutions in the workplace.

One leader in this study observed that if a female gets angry, then other women sometimes turn on her because she is not behaving how other women behave. Participants in this study consistently mentioned how difficult it is for females to “let go” when involved in a conflict with another female. Some of the leaders reflected on the time, energy, and strategies they used to help females resolve conflicts.

At least four leaders elaborated on the differences between how females and males deal with conflict. There was agreement among the leaders that conflict was a short-lived experience with males. They described men as putting the issue on the table, dealing with it, and then “it’s over”, whereas with women there is a more drawn out process with less “in your face” communication and more probing and questioning to get at the issue causing the conflict.

Differences between Supervising Support Staff and Professional Staff

At least half of the women leaders mentioned a difference between supervising female support staff and female professional level staff. One top-level leader explained that after working in three higher education institutions, in her view support staff “are just a dynamic in my mind all to their own”. Support staff were viewed as needing more time and attention than professional-level staff. They were also described as being myopic, petty, and jealous not only in interactions with the supervisor but also amongst themselves. One leader indicated that she thought support staff were, at times, overworked and misused. Several leaders made a point to express the fact that they felt

support staff should be recognized and supported because of the demand on their time and the level of their positions. While published information about support staff in universities is extremely sparse, Ruchkall's (1997) study at the University of Manitoba found that female support staff experience a chilly climate and are marginalized relative to the academic staff on campus. In another study of support staff in universities, Coalson (1987) explored whether faculty secretaries preferred working for males or females. A slight majority preferred working for males. It is hard to know whether they preferred to work for males because that is what they were used to or whether there was indeed a bias against same gender supervision for female subordinates. Coalson's study, conducted 16 years ago, may reflect the uncertainty female subordinates felt at the time regarding reporting to emerging women leaders.

The participants described professional staff as having more leeway and flexibility in their work and more perquisites from their jobs than support staff. One leader indicated that professional staff sees certain tasks as no big deal and just a part of their job, while support staff see the same tasks as additional burden to their job responsibilities. Professional staff members are seen as needing guidance rather than day-to-day direction and supervision.

When asked why a difference existed between these two groups of employees, the leaders suggested maturity, education, status, flexibility, and recognition as factors that might contribute to understanding the difference. The leaders seemed confused and uncertain about why, at times, support staff did not seem to get along amongst themselves. One research study may help to explain why the leaders in this study found it easier to supervise professionals and why support staff members behave differently than

professional staff. Townsend (1998) found in a study of perceived similarity, power and role negotiation amongst supervisors and subordinates that perceived leader-subordinate similarity consistently predicted high-quality relationships. If this is true, then support staff referred to in this study may see themselves as dissimilar to leaders and other campus professionals, particularly in terms of power, status, education, salary, flexibility in work tasks and schedule, and influence in the organization. While support staff and leaders may have gender in common, the fact exists that there are a multitude of dissimilar characteristics between them.

Discussion of How the Two Groups of Themes, Context and Essence, Are Interrelated

In this chapter, two groups of themes are discussed. The first group included three themes contributing to understanding the context of women's leaders experience in this study. The second group of five themes describes the essence of the phenomena being studied in this research. The five themes relating to the essence of the phenomenon answer the research question, "What has been your experience in supervising women?" This section addresses how these two groups of themes, the context and the essence, combine to offer a deeper understanding of the findings in this study. The common denominator between the two groups of themes ((Women's Leadership, Supervision, and Women Can Be Hard on Women) and (Female Subordinates Are Capable and Work Hard, Supervising Women Is both Positive and Negative, Relationships with Female Subordinates Are Flexible, Informal, Critical, and Complicated, Conflict with Females Is Difficult and Time Consuming, and Differences between Supervising Support Staff and Professionals)) is the importance and value of relationships among women who work

together. The common factor of the value and importance of relationships can be divided into two components with one being the way that women leaders view themselves and the other being the way women leaders view others. The ways that the women leaders view themselves includes a focus on attending to others as illustrated in Table 1.

Table 1

The Way Women Leaders View Themselves

Communicates and attends to others
Focuses on how decisions impact others
Uses feminine leadership qualities (caring, sharing)
As supervisor, is accessible, collaborative, & listens
Responds to gender related expectations from others
Worries about failure (how they see themselves and how others see them)
Views power as something to spread around to others
Gets to know subordinates and pays attention to their needs
Acts neither too feminine (concern for others) nor too masculine (concern for tasks)

The way in which the women leaders view other women including female subordinates also demonstrates the importance and value of relationships among women who work together. These views are summarized in Table 2.

Table 2

The Way Women Leaders View Other Women

Women can be hard on other women
Women may not like it when relationship with another women becomes uneven
Women highly value relationships with other females (business and personal)
Female subordinates are capable and work hard and want to be acknowledged
Supervising women is both positive and negative
Work with female subordinates is flexible, informal, and focused on communication
Conflicts between women are painful and difficult
Female support staff are more challenging to supervise than professional staff

It appears that the heart of the answer to the question, “What is it like to supervise women?” is that it is all about relationships. The women leaders in this study view both themselves and their female subordinates as focusing on the relationship aspect to supervising women. The participants care about developing, fostering, maintaining, improving, and fixing the relationships they have with other women including female subordinates. How does the experience of women leaders in this study and their focus on relationships for women leaders compare with the findings in the contemporary literature?

In Bejoian (1989) and Sperling’s (1994) research findings, they both contended that women leaders are relationship-oriented. Sperling found, much like the findings in this study, that women leaders collaborate, they manage in participatory ways, and they provide a caring, nurturing environment in the workplace. Pringle’s (1998) examination of role models of women’s leadership found that in organizations led by women the lack of formal power differentials are replaced by a leadership style that focused on relationships. Participants in her study felt they were more nurturing and supportive to others, more relaxed, and paid more attention to the people doing the task than to the task process. They expressed the belief that if leaders get their staff relationships right then success for them, as leaders, will follow. In Fullerton’s (2001) examination of women’s leadership in the public schools, she found that women’s leadership means connecting with people, working with people, and most importantly communicating well and having good people skills.

In a study of transformational and contingent reward leadership, it was found that women with both types of leadership approaches are able to form, operate, and maintain

relationships with subordinates. Interpersonal relationships with subordinates were also found to be a critical factor in high-level subordinate performance (Yammarino, Dubinsky, Comer, & Jolson, 1997). In a research study on the roles and practice of university women's leadership conducted at an Australian university, Joyner (1998) pointed to women leaders' use of people-focused skills including relationships with staff, supporting staff development needs, and handling conflict. She believed that the results of her study support leadership theory by Helgesson (1990) and Rosener (1990), which maintained that practice by women leaders, as opposed to male leaders, focuses more on people management and communication. Also included in Joyner's findings was women leader's concern with quality interpersonal relationships.

In a study of college administrators' perceptions of women supervisors, male community college administrators perceived that their own and their supervisor's leadership style as both high in task and relationship orientation. However, their female counterparts viewed their own and their supervisor's leadership to be high only in the relationship aspect of leadership (Anderson, 1993).

In a study of gender and horizontal coordination (working together with peers), it was found that women in all female work groups undertook a caring/sharing approach. They routinely did each other's work in the context of close personal relationships. This finding was not present in the male cohort of the study. It was also found that the work cultures of same gender work groups differ, reflecting distinctive aspects of culturally constructed gender behaviors (Hamilton, 2000).

In summary, it appears that there is agreement between what the women leaders in this study reported and what was found in the literature. The literature reinforces that

women leaders use skills that are relationship-oriented and that female subordinates also value relationships in the work environment.

Conclusion and Recommendations for Further Research

Conclusion

In conclusion, the women leaders in this study have had an overall positive experience in supervising females. They have high opinions of their female subordinates finding them to be hard workers and competent. The women leaders use a relationship-oriented approach to both their leadership and supervision. The women leaders prefer to empower their subordinates and enjoy supporting and mentoring them. The leaders found differences between supervising support staff and professional staff. The differences could possibly be attributed to uneven power, resources, job tasks, and flexibility between support and professional level staff members. Although conflict with female subordinates is difficult and takes time to resolve, the leaders see the effort as worthwhile due to the importance of relationships among women. The women leaders believe that others have high expectations for them and worry about failure. The leaders are sometimes caught in a double bind, torn between the desire to use traditional feminine leadership skills and the need to use traditional male leadership skills in order to be successful. Women leaders have experienced women being hard on other women, perhaps caused, in part, by an imbalance of power that can exist between two women who hold different roles/positions.

One of the more interesting findings was the difference women leaders experience while working with support and professional level staff. Support staff requires close

supervision and the leaders find themselves having to pay more attention to the dynamics among their female support staff, a phenomena leaders experience as confounding. The leaders see professional level staff as needing guidance rather than day-to-day supervision.

Recommendations for Further Research

A number of significant issues arose in this research that warrant further exploration. The first is the issue of women and conflict with other women. It is an important issue to explore because of the focus on building and preserving relationships between and among women. Members of the antifeminist movement may be interested in the issue of women not getting along with other women. However, pitting women against each other does not further the emancipation of women. Research toward understanding why women have conflicts and empowering women to accept and understand such conflict furthers women's interests. Conflict is a normal part of the work world and when it occurs amongst women it should not be viewed as wrong or abnormal. Acknowledging that women have conflicts among themselves is important. But what is more important is learning more about the etiology of such conflicts and exploring constructive ways of dealing with them. The women leaders in this study stated that conflict with women differs from conflict with men. Further exploration of this difference would also be worthwhile. Because women have been reluctant to talk about conflict with other women, few studies have been done on this phenomenon. Therefore, research on the uniqueness of female conflict also warrants further study.

A second area for additional research regards the difference between supervising support staff and professional staff. It would be interesting to explore whether this phenomenon is unique to higher educational institutions or if it is unique to Colorado's higher education institutions. The common differences between support staff and professional staff are position, power, and pay. Support staff and professional staff are so interdependent that research into how, in particular, support staff feels about these differences would be a worthy pursuit.

Another interesting finding in this study was the confounded reaction that women leaders had to the conflict among female support staff members. Several leaders seemed puzzled about why the female support staff do not get along and some even mentioned that other professionals wonder about this phenomenon as well. Specific research on the dynamics among female support staff would be valuable. Developing a keener understanding of the needs of female support staff and the dynamics among them may make the job of leaders who work with and supervise female support staff easier.

Finally, given the fact that women leaders face pressures to succeed, lack female peers, are caught in the double-bind related to male/female leadership style, and work so hard, they may experience tremendous stress. Therefore, research on the stress that women leaders face would be very worthwhile to pursue.

Recommendations for Colleges and Universities

On a more practical note, workshops on "When Women Work Together" might be quite valuable for female employees, co-workers, and supervisors in higher education

institutions. In this study, after the formal interview was over, many of the women leaders remarked at how important and fascinating the issue of supervising and working with women was for them. Yet many of them said that they had never talked about the issue before and some seemed surprised at how much they had to say about the topic. It does not appear that female employees have had much opportunity to discuss the unique dynamics of women working together. Issues that arose in this study such as communication, collaboration, conflict, and most importantly the importance of relationships among women could be a focus for workshops. The campus human resource department, women's center, women's studies programs, or ombudsman office could sponsor workshops on "When Women Work Together".

In addition to workshops, training on understanding conflict among women would be valuable for human resource professionals, mediation officers, ombudsman, and other campus leaders such as directors, department chairs, and student affairs professionals. Such training would add to these professional's understanding of the unique dynamics and needs of women who work together.

Epilogue

The opportunity to conduct research about women leaders after twenty plus years as a woman leader has been very enlightening. As I look back on the findings from this present research, I realize why my work always felt so hard, so challenging. Women leaders in higher education are rare especially at the level of Chancellor/President, Provost, Vice President, Assistant Vice President and Dean. When one does take on such

a position the pressure to succeed is tremendous. Women feel that they are held to a higher standard than men and they are caught in the double bind of not being able to act too “male” or too “female.” Women still have so few female peers at or near the top of higher education institutions that they invariably feel isolated and lonely. And, women seem to work very, very hard leaving little time to take care of themselves. The women leaders in this study talked about how important relationships are with other women and yet there are unique challenges and expectations when supervising other women. My own experience in supervising women has been quite fulfilling albeit difficult at times. Having said that, in my mind no work environment would be complete without women colleagues. This research has reinforced how important women are to each other and how much we can benefit from working well together.

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APPENDIX A

Participant Contact Letter

(DATE)

(NAME OF PARTICIPANT)

ADDRESS OF PARTICIPANT)

Dear (PARTICIPANT):

Thank you for your interest in the dissertation research on women supervising women in higher education. The unique role you hold within the higher education community in Colorado is important to our research and we are enthused about your willingness to participate in this study. The purpose of this letter is to reiterate some of the things we have previously discussed regarding the process and procedures of the research, including confidentiality, and to ask you to review the enclosed Consent Form before our first interview.

The research approach being used is a qualitative one in which we hope to capture comprehensive descriptions of your experiences as a women leader in higher education who supervises other women. With your involvement we hope to answer the following research question:

“How do women in higher education leadership positions view the experience of supervising female subordinates?”

Through your participation, we hope to understand the experience and its meaning. You will be asked to recall situations and events as well as your experience as a leader.

Your participation is highly important and we thank you for your consideration and commitment of time and effort. Our appointment is on _____ at 8:30 A.M. in your office at _____. I will collect the consent form from you at that time. If you have any further questions regarding the Consent Form or the study please do not hesitate to call either of us.

Most Sincerely,

Susan H. Panico
Co-Investigator
(970) 663-7266

Nancy Hartley, Ph.D.
Principal Investigator
(970) 491-5841

APPENDIX B

Consent Form

COLORADO STATE UNIVERSITY
INFORMED CONSENT TO PARTICIPATE IN A RESEARCH PROJECT

TITLE OF PROJECT: Women Who Supervise Women: The Experience of Women Leaders in Higher Education

NAME OF PRINCIPAL INVESTIGATOR: Nancy Hartley, Ph.D., Dean of Applied Human Sciences, Colorado State University

NAME OF CO-INVESTIGATOR: Susan H. Panico, Doctoral Candidate, School of Education, Colorado State University

CONTACT NAMES AND PHONE NUMBERS FOR QUESTIONS/PROBLEMS:
Susan H. Panico (970) 663-7266
Nancy Hartley, (970) 491-5841

PURPOSE OF THE RESEARCH: The purpose of this study is to discover the experience as a women leader in higher education with regard to supervision of female subordinates. A qualitative interview research method will be used resulting in a description of themes and patterns of the experience. The research will be conducted within Colorado by interviewing women leaders who have been nominated by those involved with the network of colleges, community colleges and universities within Colorado. The research question we seek to answer is: "How do women in higher education leadership positions view the experience of supervising female subordinates?"

PROCEDURES TO BE USED:

1. At the beginning of the first appointment, the Consent Form will be reviewed, signed, and a signed copy will be given to you.
2. The initial interview of not more than one and one half-hours will be conducted and audio-taped. In addition, some field notes will be taken. If additional time is needed, mutually agreed upon arrangements will be made, not to exceed three interviews.
3. A professional transcriber or investigator will take the cassette audiotapes and transcribe them, verbatim, without any individual identification into a written transcript and/or computer software program called HyperRESEARCH.
4. The narrative data will then be analyzed for understanding and the development of themes and patterns. These themes and patterns will then be discussed with you by telephone or email to be sure your experience is accurately reflected.
5. Upon completion of these procedures for all interviewee participants a comprehensive analysis will be made.

Page 1 of 2 Subject initials _____ Date _____

RISKS INHERENT IN THE PROCEDURES: There are no known risks. It is not possible to identify all potential risks in an experimental procedure, but the researchers have taken reasonable safeguards to minimize any known and potential, but unknown, risks.

BENEFITS: No known benefits to participants.

CONFIDENTIALITY: Confidentiality of the individual names will be protected. The names of interviewee participants will only be known by the Investigator and Co-Investigator and all materials relating thereto (letters, email, field notes and cassette tapes) will be kept in confidential files and will only be accessible to the Investigator and the Co-Investigator. The audiotapes will be destroyed upon completion of the dissertation. No other materials, transcripts, coding, or reports, both in hard copy or computer software, will identify the names of interviewee participants.

LIABILITY: The Colorado Governmental Immunity Act determines and may limit Colorado State University's legal responsibility if an injury happens because of this study. Claims against the University must be filed within 180 days of injury.

Questions about the subjects' rights may be directed to Celia S. Walker, Regulatory Compliance, (970) 491-1563.

PARTICIPATION: Your participation in this research is voluntary. If you decide to participate in the study, you may withdraw your consent and stop participating at any time without penalty or loss of benefits to which you are otherwise entitled.

Your signature acknowledges that you have read the information stated and willingly sign this consent form. Your signature also acknowledges that you have received on the date signed, a copy of this document containing 2 pages.

Participant name (printed)

Participant signature

Date

Investigator or Co-Investigator signature

Date

Page 2 of 2 Subject initials _____ Date _____

APPENDIX C

Example of Initial Coding of Transcript

Example of Initial Coding of Transcript

A: I think it is a competitive thing. A number of years ago I was involved in some research about women in team playing and that one of the things if you look at the research literature it will tell you that until fairly recently in women's athletics women and young girls did not grow up in teams and at a different level competition was subtle. It was to be a good student but that did not necessarily mean you were a bad student. I mean it wasn't the next person both of you could win. I don't think that women sometimes have a very good focus on their own achievement as separate from somebody else. I mean it is not dependant on you failing for me winning. I don't think they have good boundaries, I don't think about competing. And so I think that jealousy starts to creep for reasons of what other people have that I don't have whether that is power or... and I think that you see more of it in the classified staff. Part of it is lower pay, less status. Universities are hard places because professional make more money and they get far more perc's and then they see them waltz in and out of life... go get their hair cut or go to the dentist and it is hard.

a competitive thing

♀ don't have a very good focus on their own achievement as separate from others

♂ dependant on you failing for me winning

♂ think ♀ have good boundaries jealousy creeps in because of what some ♀ have that other don't

classified staff have lower pay, status; > jealousy expressed from classified staff

S: With regard to power, can you talk about what that means to you when you are supervising women?

professional staff > flexible time schedule - causes resentment
"waltz in and out of life"

APPENDIX D

Example of Statements of Meaning for Individual Participant

Example of Statements of Meaning for Individual Participant

35. Women can be hard on other women especially when power between women is disparate
- 35a. Interesting that subordinates and the general public are so quick to question a women leader;** believes women generally have more problems with other women having power than with men having power – especially with classified staff
- 35b. Doesn't think women are very good at celebrating the success of other women ;** men seem to do this better; it is a competitive thing with women; women seem to believe that their success depends on someone else failing
- 35c. Jealousy creeps in because of what some women have that others don't -** women are more jealous about the pecking order; jealousy is also due to the fact that the higher level position you have the more perq's, resources, power and freedom you have; this causes jealousy with the women who have less of this – such as the classified staff; classified staff have lower pay, status – more jealousy expressed from classified staff; professional staff have a flexible schedule and that causes resentment
36. **It can be lonely at the top**
- 36a. As a woman leader must be comfortable and even appreciate “being alone” -** have worked mostly with males and almost at no level has she had a peer group; as a female executive you are even isolated economically
- 36b. The higher up you move in higher education, the less compliments, rewards, and recognition you get for doing a good job
37. **Women leaders must know themselves in order to be successful**
- 37a. Women leaders must really understand and embrace their leadership strengths;** one cannot be like a male and cannot be what everyone else wants you to be; must know your strengths and not be willing to give them up
- 37b. Wonders if the reason women have failed is because they have not yet had enough experience in how to really figure out who they are and how they work
39. **Women have both strengths and weaknesses in the workplace**
- 38a. Strengths include -** collaborative, willing to think about the whole picture and the long haul, are group problem solvers; women will think and think and think and work at problems
- 38b. Weaknesses include -** doesn't think women have a very good focus on their own achievement as separate from somebody else; doesn't think women have good boundaries