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Pepperdine University  
Graduate School of Education and Psychology

ADVANCING THE PRACTICE OF AUTHENTIC LEADERSHIP AMONG  
PROFESSIONAL WOMEN: A QUALITATIVE PHENOMENOLOGICAL  
INVESTIGATION

A dissertation submitted in partial satisfaction  
of the requirements for the degree of  
Doctor of Education in Organizational Leadership

by

Jane C. Felt

July 2017

Farzin Madjidi, Ed.D. – Dissertation Chairperson

This dissertation, written by

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under the guidance of a Faculty Committee and approved by its members, has been submitted to and accepted by the Graduate Faculty in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of

DOCTOR OF EDUCATION

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## DEDICATION

I dedicate my dissertation work to my husband and best friend Greg Felt, who has supported me throughout this entire process. His belief and faith in me surpass my own. Thank you for pushing me to pursue my dreams. Thank you for the long weekends you spent alone, and for the countless hours, you spent proofreading my work. You have always been there for me, and I love you for it.

I also dedicate this dissertation to my devoted and loving parents, Robert and Eleanor Constable. Everything I am is because of you. Thank you for all the years of love and encouragement, you have always been my cheerleader. I hope you know how much you mean to me, and how much I love you.

Finally, I dedicate this work to my three children, Gregory, Robert, and Christian. May each of you recognize the importance of knowledge and never stop pursuing it in your life. Your presence and demonstration of pride at my graduating events mean so much. I love you guys and am so very proud of each of you.

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My acknowledgment would not be complete without thanking Pepperdine University, and the Graduate School of Education and Psychology. The Doctorate of Education in Organizational Leadership (EDOL) program has been a life-changing experience. I am grateful to all of my instructors for sharing their knowledge and helping me to become the person I am today.

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- Society of Human Resource Management (SHRM)
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## ABSTRACT

Due to deeply held gender roles and cultural norms in organizations, women leaders struggle in their ability to lead authentically (Cook, 2012). Leading with authenticity encourages women to bring their whole self to work, providing them with the flexibility and freedom to exhibit their best qualities in the workplace. Authentic leadership serves to inspire women to believe in themselves and their abilities, enabling women to foster relationships and transparency that can transform work environments and corporate cultures to become more accepting of individual differences.

This study investigated the leadership experiences of professional women across multiple generations. Data collection consisted of semi-structured interviews with 15 women leaders. Leaders were asked 12 interview questions aligned to five research questions. The questions focused on the past and current leadership experiences. Key findings of the study revealed 64 themes. As a result of the study, authenticity was identified as a significant contributor toward the success of women in leadership roles. Being true to self and being genuine was the most important factor of authenticity in both a women's professional and personal life. The barriers and challenges that women face include bridging the gap between the male stereotype of leadership and the socially accepted female gender role. These challenges present obstacles for women leaders who attempt to embrace and emulate their true selves at work. Sometimes at the risk of losing their job. Women depend upon their faith, prayer, and practice of reflection and meditation to help them lead with authenticity. These strategies along with self-awareness help women to develop the courage needed to continue moving forward in their leadership practice.

Success for authentic women leaders is defined by their career and the ability to perform personally fulfilling work. Success is also defined by the leader's ability to develop and maintain strong relationships with family and friends while also helping others. Recommendations for aspiring women leaders include most significantly the ability to be a leader of self, possessing high self-awareness and building self-confidence. These recommendations are followed by a practice of facing fears and embracing authenticity early in life and career.

Keywords: authentic leadership; authenticity; women leaders

## Chapter One: Introduction

### Background

The complex nature of leadership and its practice has been a topic of study for centuries. It is a phenomenon consisting of multiple dimensions, with varying degrees of interpretation; however, one common theme is the notion of leadership, as an influencing process. More specifically, the ability to effectively influence other individuals to achieve a specific goal (Rowe & Guerrero, 2011).

**Leadership and influence.** The degree of influence that leaders have on their followers is an indication of leadership performance. Typically, the more influence, the more effective the leader. Leaders achieve influence through a variety of means. However, the three most common structures include: (a) the leader's authority, (b) the leader's motivation for power, and (c) the degree of trust that exists between the leader and followers. Influence through authority is an extrinsic approach legitimately enforced through organizational design, management structure, title, or position. The motivation for power is an intrinsic approach and may be attributed to an individual's personality, as it is differentiated by a person's desire to influence. Individuals with high power motivation have an increased desire to attain leadership positions (McClelland, 1995; Miner, 1978). Trust is a dually intrinsic approach, foundationally based on relationship and the mutual interests between a leader and their followers.

**Authentic leadership.** Corporate misconduct and unethical performance reporting from top executives have eroded follower trust, causing a shift in the perspective on current leadership practices. Authentic and trustworthy leaders who emphasize long-lasting, value-based relationships are more favorably regarded and



highly sought after. The shift has also spawned a renewed interest among social scientists to define the essence of authentic leadership (Spitzmuller & Ilies, 2010). The reasons for increased interest may be due to the impact that authentic leaders have beyond mere financial success; as authentic leaders tend to be more socially responsible, involving themselves in issues regarding public policy, and organizational problems (George, 2003). Authentic leaders strive to serve others through their position of leadership; they empower their people by leading through example. Guided by qualities of truth, compassion, and righteousness (George, 2003).

Leaders with high integrity and a commitment to deeply held principles instill a sense of trust that followers aspire to and look for in their leaders. George (2003) describes this type of leader as an authentic leader. Irvine and Reger (2006) suggest that “authentic leading inspires, supports, and guides others to discover and express their uniqueness. Regardless of the leadership role, authentic leadership impacts others through the strength of an authentic presence” (p. 6).

The difference in traits between men and women and how they naturally behave appear in their demeanor, personality, and ultimately in their style of leadership (Lakshmi & Peter, 2015). Common associations that people relate to women and men are communal and agentic respectively. The communal definition represents characteristics that ascribe to a nurturing persona, displaying affection, sympathy, sensitivity, and gentleness. Whereas, the agentic persona portrays a more assertive, controlling, and confident posture, displaying behavior that is independent, competitive, self-sufficient and sometimes aggressive (Eagly & Carli, 2007). The latter persona

aligns closest to today's stereotypical attributes of a leader (Eagly, Makhijani, & Klonsky, 1992; Heilman, Block, Martell, & Simon, 1989; Schein, 1973).

**Women in leadership.** Leaders can influence followers, once the leader has achieved a degree of legitimacy or acceptance from the follower. Without legitimacy, leaders are forced to employ tactics of negotiation and persuasion to advance their cause. Women leaders often struggle to achieve legitimacy in the workplace, due to their lack of leadership roles. Women find themselves in an outsider social group status that complicates their ability to effectively influence and to advance their values (Eagly, 2005). Additionally, the cultural emphasis on a female's physical appearance and the frequent dismissal of women who openly display emotion also inhibit women. Moreover, communication presents an added challenge when one considers the different styles, metaphors and life stories women possess compared to men (Cook, 2012).

Generations of women who have chosen to accept leadership positions have faced a multitude of challenges and have experienced varying degrees of hardship and discrimination. However, evidence has shown that attitudes are changing for the better. In 1965, 35% of male executives approved of females occupying management positions, in 2005, that number was reported to be 88%. Additionally, in 1965 only 27% of men were comfortable working for a female, whereas in 2005, that number increased to 71% (Powell, 2011). The shift in attitude, as reported over the past 40 years will positively impact the future generations of female leaders.

**Masculine stereotyping.** Leadership role research conducted by Koenig, Mitchell, Eagly, and Ristikari (2011) focused on the extent of masculine stereotyping

among today's leaders. The meta-analysis consisted of 69 studies with 199 effect sizes, from three different research paradigms. The first paradigm focused on investigations on the similarities between the male and leader stereotype to the female and leader stereotype (Schein, 1973). The second paradigm compared the attributes of communal and agentic stereotypes (Powell & Butterfields, 1979). The third paradigm compared the occupational stereotypes by gender (Shinar, 1975). The results of the meta-analysis indicated that the masculine interpretation of leadership had diminished some over past years. However, the study also determined that despite the integration of feminine attributes, the prevailing definition of successful leadership remains attributed to male characteristics, such as competitiveness, assertiveness, and decisiveness (Mitchell, Eagly, & Ristikari, 2011). Therefore, despite a woman's high degree of power motivation and desire to lead, incongruent role behaviors and conflict may persist (Koenig et al. (2011).

The extent of influence that gender roles have in an organization is evident in another meta-analysis involving the evaluation of women and men in similar leadership roles (Eagly, Makhijani, & Klonsky, 1992). The study revealed that participants react differently to male and female leaders when given similar situations. Female leaders were slightly devalued when compared to male leaders and devalued to an even higher degree when compared to men in stereotypical masculine styles, such as authoritarian or directive (Eagly, Makhijani, & Klonsky, 1992). Moreover, women who are unable or unwilling to adjust their adapted male-typical agentic behavior with the accepted female-typical behaviors are more prone to be overlooked for advancement (Eagly, 2005; Heilman, 2001).

**Role congruity theory.** Individuals experience reproach when their actions do not align with the expectations and norms of society (Eagly & Karau, 2002). The inconsistency between the expectations of the perceived leader and the female gender role places women leaders in a position to question and subjectively interpret how to present themselves when leading. Women are challenged to conform to two conflicting sets of expectations. When they align their behavior to their gender role, they fall short of the expectations of a leader, and when they align their behavior to their leader role, they fall short of the expectations of the gender role (Eagly & Karau, 2002). The display of character inconsistency serves as yet another impediment that women face while attempting to form trusting relationships. Leaders and followers develop trust through a pattern of consistent behavior, when women are not able to display consistency, followers are forced to determine their relationship from what they perceive to be pretentious behavior (Eagly, 2005). Leading with authenticity can prove challenging for women, and today, more than ever, women leaders need to work together to overcome the stereotypes of the past.

### **Statement of the Problem**

When female gender roles are inconsistent with workplace culture or leader expectations, women in the workplace are disadvantaged. Women struggle to implement their leadership strategies and to influence effectively. In their efforts to succeed, women are compelled to adapt their behavior to meet expectations, often at the expense of compromising their identity and what they stand for (Eagly, 2005).

Women, to be perceived as legitimate leaders, emulate male behavior to fit the masculine identity of a leader. In doing so, they violate their gender role, creating a

perception of being phony and inauthentic. Rejecting their archetype of communal values, such as friendliness, support, warmth, and a caring attitude causes confusion among their followers, while also denying women the right to know, accept, and remain faithful to themselves (Toegel, 2010).

Leading with authenticity encourages women to bring their whole self to work and has the potential to ease the worry of not measuring up to an old preconceived idea of who they should be. Thus, eliminating the ever haunting feeling of inadequacy and self-doubt. Authentic leadership inspires women to believe in themselves and their abilities. Additionally, it contributes to a more realistic and transparent work environment affording both leaders and followers an opportunity to build more trusting and meaningful relationships. Authentic leadership ultimately improves the quality of life for women leaders, as it provides them the ability to live a more holistic and non-compartmentalized life.

### **Purpose Statement**

Due to the deeply held gender roles and cultural norms in organizations, women leaders struggle in their ability to lead authentically (Cook, 2012). In their effort to meet expectations of the conventional leader, women may attempt to approach leadership with a direct, no-nonsense approach that is often unnatural for them (Baker, 2014; Broughton & Miller, 2009). The emotional effort it takes to alter and sustain this unnatural behavior eventually takes its toll in the form of doubt and low self-confidence (Eagly, 2005). Presenting yet another disadvantage since leaders are expected to present themselves with confidence if they are to influence others successfully and to continue to advance in their leadership positions (Eagly, 2005).

The study served to examine and learn from the leadership experiences of successful women leaders across multiple generations. The study investigated the unique challenges women leaders face and the strategies they employed to lead authentically. To further understand how leadership was applied, the study sought to clarify how successful women leaders define and measure success, while also soliciting their recommendations for aspiring leaders. The study contributes to the specific knowledge and experiences of successful women leaders providing a basis for the development of learning materials that will communicate the importance of authenticity and encourage the acceptance and demonstration of authentic leadership.

### **Research Questions**

The following research questions guided the study:

RQ1: How does leading with authenticity contribute to women leaders' career success?

RQ2: What barriers and challenges do successful women leaders face in leading with authenticity?

RQ3: What strategies do successful women leaders employ to lead authentically?

RQ4: How do women leaders who lead with authenticity define success for themselves?

RQ5: Would successful women leaders recommend being authentic to aspiring women leaders?

## **Significance of the Study**

Treasurer, Adelman, and Cohn (2013) contend that the underrepresentation of women in executive leadership roles is not attributed to intentional discrimination, as much as it is an outcome of the structures in the workplace that favor male leadership. Treasurer et al. (2013) propose that these structures exist as a result of the invisible barriers and deeply held cultural beliefs about gender and leadership. Confronting these stereotypical ideas is necessary and paramount if women expect to advance in leadership roles, especially at the executive level. Through assembly, understanding, encouragement and the sharing of best practices, women leaders can initiate and promote change by challenging the status quo and reinforcing their unique leadership style.

Women can offer a unique perspective in the workplace by leveraging their diverse life experiences and their roles as a mother and wife. Their communal values and interpersonal sensitivities can positively contribute to the development of a more caring and people oriented work environment and culture. Women are encouraged to take inventory of their skillsets and to identify their areas of strengths and weakness (Baker, 2014).

Identifying the challenges that successful women leaders face executing their leadership strategies could provide an opportunity to reveal an unspoken desire for more authenticity. Perhaps there lies a desire for women leaders to embrace their individuality more fully. Thereby, leading a movement to promote more self-awareness and relational transparency.

The core concept of authenticity is captured in Shakespeare's (1901) famous quote, "To thine own self be true" (Hamlet; Act 1; Scene iii). The phrase suggests that the fundamental component of authenticity is to know and accept oneself. Erickson (1995) posit that authenticity is more than a construct but rather an attribute existing on a continuum. The tighter one grasps hold of their values and identity, the more authentic they become. It is this belief that Irvine and Reger (2006) distinguish leadership as a form of presence versus a position, and where the foundational building block of authentic leadership reside.

By investigating successful authentic women leaders, their strategies, and challenges, the study clarifies how successful authentic women measure success. Also provided are recommendations for aspiring leaders. The information gathered from the study may be used to educate the workforce and to promote a general awareness of gender role differences and the cultural barriers that produce challenges for women in leadership. Additionally, the information may contribute to the development of learning materials and workshops to help instill confidence, encouragement, and support for females.

Results of the study provide experiential information to formulate a very specific learning curriculum for aspiring women leaders. Training components could include specific elements, for both genders of the workforce. The instructional materials may serve to assist professional coaches, while also offering opportunities for consultants to advance the practice of authenticity. The study contributes to the existing body of knowledge relating to women in leadership, gender roles, and authenticity.



## **Limitations and Assumptions**

**Limitations.** The study was limited to successful women across multiple generations and includes the perspectives of three different generational groups: (a) women between the ages of 50 and 68 who are considered to be part of the Baby Boomer generation, (b) women between the ages of 36 and 49 who make-up the X Generation and (c) the youngest generation that is comprised of women between the ages of 14 and 35 commonly known as the Y Generation or Millennial Generation. The study did not limit participants by particular industry and included both profit and nonprofit companies. Semi-structured interviews were used to conduct the study. Therefore, the reliance of memory and perceptions present some limitations. An additional limitation to consider includes the effect of the multiple variables upon the study including geographic location, timing, current business, economic climate, and setting.

The researcher is female and has served in multiple leadership positions, which could have introduced unintentional bias into the results. Every effort was made to minimize that possibility and to ensure that personal opinions and perceptions did not adversely influence the research results. To reduce unintentional influence, Chapter three includes a detailed statement of personal bias and how she mitigated its impact on the analysis, research findings, and conclusions.

**Assumptions.** The study participants included women that were current members of the National Association of Professional Women (NAPW) South Orange County Chapter. Participants had at least 10 or more years of working experience and had earned at a minimum a Bachelor's Degree level of education. A formal

management or leadership role was not required. Women of different generations experience different lifetime events that influenced their values, beliefs, perceptions and leadership styles. Additionally, different industries possess distinct corporate cultures. Therefore, the norms, values, beliefs, and attitudes are reflected in those cultures and may be evident in the participant's leadership style.

### **Definition of Terms**

**Archetype.** Used to describe the characteristics or patterns of an original. The archetype is what is commonly known as the genuine and original representation of something. Copies are made from an archetype (Archetype, n.d.).

**Authenticity.** An individual's ability to synthesize their personal experiences into a discrete set of values and beliefs that serve as a guide to one's behavior. Capacity to live one's life as an expression of one's thoughts, emotions, core values, and beliefs. A perception of others that an individual's behavior is in alignment with one's true self (Harter, 2002).

**Authentic leadership.** A practice that results in a style of leadership that promotes trust among leaders and followers. Authentic leaders emphasize a strong commitment to their core beliefs and values. They can demonstrate those qualities in their actions and behavior (Northouse, 2013). Leadership behavior that leverages positive psychological capacities to increase self-awareness, and self-regulation practices. The elements of the Authentic Leadership construct include: self-awareness, internalized moral perspective, balanced processing and relational transparency (Walumbwa, Avolio, Gardner, Wernsing & Peterson, 2008).

**Baby boomers.** Individuals born between 1946 and 1964. They are currently between the ages of 50 and 68 years old. Key life events include the Vietnam War, Kennedy Assassinations, Civil Rights Movement and the Women's Movement. Key influences include traditionally structured families and the advent of television (Tapscott, 2009; Twenge, Campbell, Hoffman & Lance, 2010).

**Gender roles.** Expectations and preferences that represent the stereotypical characteristics and behavior of a particular sex. Gender roles define the descriptive and cultural characteristics that have evolved to be the norm for each sex. A set of behaviors that are commonly associated with a particular gender (Eagly, 2005).

**Generation X.** Individuals born between 1965 and 1981, currently between the ages of 36 and 49 years old. Key life events include an increase in divorce, latchkey kids, AIDS as an epidemic, fall of the Berlin Wall, high unemployment and job competition/layoffs. Key influences include single parents and Sesame Street (Tapscott, 2009; Twenge et al., 2010).

**Generation Y/Millennials.** Individuals born between 1982 and 1999, currently between the ages of 14 and 35 years old. Critical life events include corporate scandals, Columbine shooting, September 11<sup>th</sup>, 2001 terrorist attack, Gulf War, the Internet and video games. Key influences include: "everyone gets a trophy," continuously nurtured self-esteem and access to information twenty-four, seven (Tapscott, 2009; Twenge et al., 2010).

**Influence.** Meaningful communication and behavior that serves to affect the thoughts, and behavior of others. Leaders achieve influence through a common belief

or value that is mutually agreed to be important. It is a primary outcome of effective leadership (Cashman, 2008).

**Leadership.** A phenomenon concerned primarily with managing change within an organization. A topic of study for centuries with varying degrees of interpretations. Authors who have contributed to the study perceive leadership as either ability, a process, a relationship, art or an expression of self.

- Rowe & Guerrero (2011) interpret leadership as the capacity to exert influence on others to accomplish a specific goal.
- Northouse (2013) looks at leadership as a process that a leader can use to influence others to achieve goals.
- Kouzes and Posner (1987) interpret leadership as a relationship that exists between someone who chooses to lead and someone who chooses to follow.
- Goleman (2005) defines leadership as an art of persuasion. The ability to persuade others to achieve a common objective.
- Cashman (2008) asserts that leadership is an individual expression of self and should represent all dimensions of a person in action.

**Power motivation.** An interpersonal difference in the desire to influence others. Power motivation can be used to encourage people to pursue positions in organizations that assume control (Miner, 1978). According to McClelland and Burnham (1976), power motivation contributes to managerial success.

**Stereotype.** The belief that people or things with similar characteristics are all the same. The act of applying an unfair generalization. To categorize and treat others according to a preconceived idea (Stereotype, n.d.).

## **Chapter Summary**

Chapter one provides a background of the phenomenon of leadership and the influence and authority that leaders have on their followers (Rowe & Guerrero, 2011). It stresses the importance of building trust, displaying high moral standards, and being of service to others. Also discussed, are the different demonstrations of authority and power between male and female leaders (McClelland, 1995; Miner, 1978). Authenticity, as an approach to leadership, was introduced and the reasons it has become important to organizations and the social sciences (George, 2003; Spitzmuller & Ilies, 2010).

The research problem points to the inconsistency between female gender roles and workplace culture. Focusing on leader expectations and the disadvantages women face when trying to implement their leadership strategies and influence (Eagly, 2005). The study served to examine and learn from leadership experiences of successful women leaders, by investigating the unique challenges they face and the strategies that they employed to lead authentically. The study seeks to understand how successful women leaders apply their leadership skills and how they define and measure success. Participants also made available their recommendations for aspiring women leaders.

Five research questions were presented and used to guide the study and the participant interviews. Also included, are the known limitations and assumptions of the study. The study is significant because it brings meaning to the voices of women in leadership positions. Their experiences may be used to heighten awareness and

education of the workforce toward the significance of gender role differences and the cultural barriers that produce challenges for women leaders. The known limitations of the study were presented along with a brief description of the assumptions.

Chapter two include a thorough review of the literature associated with the phenomenon of leadership, the emergence of authentic leadership and the role that gender plays in leadership. The definition of leadership is presented articulating the differences between leadership and management and how effective leadership facilitates adaptive change. An examination of leadership competencies shows how skills reveal themselves into individualized leadership approaches. Also presented are experiential leadership development and different leadership styles. A description of the practical and theoretical perspectives of authentic leadership are introduced, along with a description of each of the elements of the authentic leadership model (Gardner, Avolio, Luthans, May, & Walumbwa, 2005). Also described are the innate differences between men and women and how evolutionary, biological and social structures have contributed to the development of gender roles, stereotyping, and leadership expectations. Lastly, included is a review of authentic leadership developmental approaches and opportunities.

Chapter three addresses the nature of the study, the structure, and appropriateness of a phenomenological methodology, a detailed review of the research design including subject selection, human considerations, and data collection. Also included are the interview protocol process, a statement of personal bias and the data analysis procedures. Chapter four includes a summary of the participant interviews and the research findings. Finally, Chapter five provides a synthesis of the research findings

and a presentation of the conclusions, implications, and recommendations that have emerged from the study.

## **Chapter Two: Literature Review**

Chapter two provides a thorough review of the theoretical and seminal literature related to five specific knowledge areas of the dissertation. The knowledge areas include: (a) the phenomenon of leadership, (b) the emergence of authentic leadership, (c) the implications of gender and leadership, (d) the challenges and leadership styles of women, and (e) leadership development as it relates to women. The objective of the literature review is to inform the study as it attempts to identify the challenges that women in leadership face, the strategies women employ to lead authentically, how women leaders define success and recommendations that would be helpful to aspiring female leaders.

The leadership knowledge area provides a definition of leadership while describing the differences between leadership and management, and how effective leadership facilitates adaptive change. Leadership competencies are examined, demonstrating the expression of skills into distinct and individualized leadership styles. Experiential leadership development is discussed, illustrating how individual leadership experiences promote personal growth that can transform leadership styles. Finally, the Full-range Leadership Theory is presented, emphasizing the integration of multiple leadership styles for today's business environment.

The authentic leadership knowledge area introduces the emergence and portrayal of authentic leadership. A contrast between both the practice-based and theoretical approach to authentic leadership differentiates the application of this leadership style. Also addressed are the four constructs of the authentic leadership



model including self-awareness and three self-regulating components (Gardner et al., 2005).

The gender and leadership knowledge area introduces two sex origin theories, in an attempt to identify the reasons for differences between males and females.

Evolutionary psychology (Buss, 1995; Hyde, 2014) and social structural theory (Eagly, 1987; Hyde, 2014; Ridgeway, 1991) attempt to explain how biological attributes of each sex contributes to behavior and assumed gender roles. Additionally, how gender roles have contributed to social stereotyping, and the phenomenon known as the glass ceiling.

The last two knowledge areas include an examination of women practicing leadership. These areas provide insight into the unique challenges that women face and the different strategies and styles they employ across different generations. Also included is an examination of success perceptions between men and women. Finally, recommendations from the literature identify suggestions for the development of authentic women leaders and what organizations can do to help facilitate a more cohesive and non-biased workforce.

## **Leadership**

Despite nearly a century of research on the concept of leadership, multiple perspectives and definitions exist that attempt to articulate the phenomenon clearly. Northouse (2013) describes leadership as a process of influence, for the purpose of achieving goals. He identifies four distinct components: (a) leadership as a process, a transactional event occurring between leader and follower; (b) leadership as influence, whereby leaders influence followers; (c) leadership occurring in groups, where the focus

of leader influence is toward a group serving a common purpose; and (d) leadership involving common goals, reinforcing the importance of relationship and shared purpose. It is the relationship between leader and follower that inspires commitment in an organization to produce results that matter to the collective (Friedman, 2008).

Sustainable organizations align organizational values with the values of their employees. They encourage employees to share their personal values and expect those values to guide decision making when faced with corporate dilemmas. The leaders routinely seek feedback, input, and direction from their employees, while embodying honesty, integrity, and loyalty in all their actions. These practices serve to reinforce a culture of both accountability and authenticity (Irvine & Reger, 2006).

**Leadership versus management.** Leadership acts as an influencing function and is primarily concerned with managing change within organizations. In contrast, management serves as a coping function, primarily concerned with bringing stability and order to an organization. Given the fast pace, technology advances, and the global environment of today, top leaders are expected to be proficient at both, as the work of each is complimentary. Clear distinctions between management and leadership activities include planning, organizing, and controlling versus setting direction, aligning people, motivating others, and managing change (Kotter, 1990).

**Adapting to change.** Rapid changes in society, values, competition, technology and global markets are forcing organizations to become more agile in their operations. The difficulty organizations have adapting to change is not caused as much by the markets, systems, and competitions; as it is by the acceptance, engagement, and mobilization of the organization's human capital. Organizational culture change is

necessary to embrace any adaptive change successfully and can prove to be quite a challenge. Leaders can help initiate the process by clearly communicating the need for change, engaging the employees in the change effort, and outlining the expected benefits and impact to the organization (Heifetz & Laurie, 2001).

**Leadership competencies.** Identifying and developing outstanding leadership talent requires a clear understanding of the capabilities that leaders must possess to perform their jobs. Daniel Goleman (1998) and his work studying the phenomenon of leadership determined that three basic categories of competency exist for a leader: (a) technical skills, (b) cognitive abilities, and (c) emotional intelligence. His studies also indicate that the ratio of emotional intelligence exceeds the importance of technical and cognitive skills when identifying the attributes of excellent performance. Additionally, his studies show that the need for emotional intelligence proficiency increases as the leader progresses in their career path. Emotional Intelligence involves: (a) the practice of discovery, (b) discipline, (c) inspiration, (d) emotion and (e) social skills.

**Perfection not required.** As the dynamics of corporate America shift from command and control to collaborate and coordinate, organizations are responding with flatter and less hierarchical organizational structures. The result is a faster flow of information, not just up and down the organization, but also horizontally enabling rapid response to work and improved engagement and innovation. The dramatic shift has positively affected the time that it takes to address problems, and to respond to markets, since more people are engaged in the process and can contribute (Ancona, Malone, Orlikowski & Senge, (2007). However, the myth of the perfect leader has not shifted at the same pace. Many leaders still hold themselves to the standard of having to have it

all figured out, and having all of the answers to solve today's problems. Perfection is virtually impossible. Ancona et al. (2007) offer a set of four core capabilities for the leader of the 21<sup>st</sup> century. These skills enable leaders to focus on what is most important, inspiring their workforce. The capabilities include (a) the ability to create a vision for the future, (b) building relationships, (c) understanding the business environment and (d) coming up with new and novel ways of getting things done.

***Being real.*** Inspirational leaders can articulate their competence as a leader, while also demonstrating their need for assistance. They possess high self-awareness and the courage to admit their shortcomings and weaknesses. The display of presence projects strength, while also building trust, solidarity, and commitment among their followers. Inspirational leaders rely on their instincts and empathic nature to appeal to the needs of their followers. They are not afraid to try new things and can apply context to each situation, to determine the approach most suited to the situation (Goffee & Jones, 2000).

**Leadership development.** Action learning and the practice of situation and experience based scenarios for leadership development have been and continue to be widespread in organizational settings. Action learning provides the learner with a variety of appropriate settings and situations, where leaders can practice applying their skills. The method is adaptive and is cost effective, compared to the typical instructor-led approach (Ardichvili, Natt och Dag, & Manderscheid, 2016). According to Volz-Peacock, Carson & Marquardt (2016), active and experiential learning is becoming one of the most popular methods of delivery for learning and development programs.

**Experiential learning.** Bennis and Thomas (2002), to better understand how leaders deal with adversity, interviewed 40 top leaders over a three year period. The results identified an uncanny, but a common event that contributed significantly to their leadership development. Each participant could recall a unique life experience that was an intense, unplanned trial or event that caused them to reflect and question their existence and purpose in life. Bennis and Thomas (2002), referred to these experiences as “crucible” (p. 40) experiences that once overcome, can guide a leader to increased self-confidence and a renewed commitment to their life purpose and work.

Crucible experiences are as diverse as the population experiencing them. One thing is sure; leaders experience growth through their experience of hardship. Leaders are encouraged to share their experience with others and to do so with a compelling voice that displays integrity (Bennis & Thomas, 2002).

**Transformation.** How an individual interprets their life experiences and how they react in a time of hardship is defined by Rooke & Torbert (2005) as internal “action-logic” (p. 67). Rooke & Torbert’s research has involved 25 years of study, using the Leadership Development Profile. The tool consists of 36 items, where participants are asked to complete phrases. The expressions are then used to determine the leader’s dominant way of thinking. Seven transformational profiles have emerged from the research involving thousands of participants, ranging in age of 25-55. Of the seven developmental action-logics nearly, 55% fell below the average (Opportunists, Diplomats, Experts), 30% measured average (Achiever), with only 15% scoring above the mean (Individualist, Strategist, Alchemist).

Perhaps the most encouraging finding is that leaders can progress from one action logic profile to another, given their personal growth and experiences. External events, changes in work environment, and structured development interventions may also spark transformation. A leader's journey of development is long, but, clearly, those who are compelled to become the best that they can be will trudge forward in their quest for self-awareness and self-actualization (Rooke & Torbert, 2005).

**Full-range leadership theory.** The comprehensive and integrated theory that emerged in response to the perception that prevailing leadership theories were too limited. Developers Avolio and Bass (1991), included three leadership typologies: (a) Laissez-faire, (b) Transactional, and (c) Transformational. Laissez-faire relates to the absence of leadership and the inability to exhibit authority, take responsibility and make decisions. Bass (1985) argued that leaders should focus beyond transactional management tasks to discover the real potential of their followers. He advocated for a more inspiring approach to leadership that would challenge followers to push themselves to a level of execution that was more impactful to both their development and the performance of the organization. He referred to these styles of leadership as Transactional and Transformational Leadership

**Transactional leadership.** A style of leadership that focuses on the definition and accomplishment of goals; it includes three factors: (a) contingent reward leadership, (b) management by exception (active) and (c) management by exception (passive). Contingent reward leadership demonstrates the use of reward and recognition to show appreciation to followers for compliance and achievement of specified job roles and tasks. Management by exception (active) demonstrates leader

engagement in activities to ensure that a level of performance is satisfactory met. Management by exception (passive) is behavior exhibited by a leader to correct a situation once a nonconformance has occurred (Antonakis, Avolio & Sivasubramaniam, 2003).

***Transformational leadership.*** A style of leadership that emphasizes behavior to increase awareness of the contributions that followers can collectively offer an organization. It includes five factors: (a) idealized influence (attributed), (b) idealized influence (behavior), (c) inspirational motivation, (d) intellectual stimulation and (e) individualized consideration. Idealized influence (attributed) links leader character with leader presence. Typically, leaders with high influence are charismatic and exude confidence while maintaining a presence of power and authority. Idealized influence (behavior) associates how leader and behavior emulate espoused values and beliefs. Inspirational motivation relates to the ability of the leader to motivate others through their positive energy, communication, and vision for the future. Intellectual stimulation concerns the aptitude to challenge others to strive for excellence and to set high personal expectations. Lastly, individualized consideration conveys the personalized interest the leader exhibits in his followers by mentoring, supporting, and encouraging their personal development and future aspirations (Antonakis et al., 2003).

***Full-range leadership model.*** Recognizing two of the three typologies included in full-range leadership theory, the University of Washington, Foster School of Business, Center for Leadership and Strategic Thinking (CLST) created a metaphor of a housing structure to represent a variation of the full-range leadership theory. The model identified in the Full-range Leadership Report (2015) includes two additional

leadership styles; authentic leadership and strategically distributed leadership. The model applies the four constructs of authentic leadership as the four foundational pillars of the house. The foundation of the house serves as the source of strength from which the house is built; it brings stability to the four structural walls and the roof that rests upon it. The pillars include self-awareness and the three self-regulating components of moral behavior, balanced processing and transparency. The house's support structure is made up of four walls representing the four behavioral constructs for transformational leadership including (a) idealized influence, (b) inspirational motivation, (c) intellectual stimulation and (d) individual consideration.

Again these structures represent the constructs that are designed to motivate and inspire followers to act. Idealized influence is the leader's ability to articulate a vision and to encourage followers to work collectively to achieve that vision. The leader exhibits exceptional moral behavior and uses his character of strength and confidence to gain trust from his followers. The leader serves as a prominent role model that serves to inspire followership. Inspirational motivation is the leader's ability to articulate how each of his followers is contributing to the overall vision. The leader identifies individual expectations that serve to motivate followers to fulfill their role in the shared vision. Intellectual stimulation is a leader's ability to encourage self-reflection among followers to stimulate personal growth. Reflection promotes growth by challenges existing mental models and considering alternatives. Individual consideration is the personal action and attention that a leader takes to consider what opportunities may be available to the follower to improve in both his professional and personal life (Bass, Avolio, Jung, & Berson, 2003). These support structures



encourage high expectations and work in tandem with the transactional activities that are represented by the house's utilities.

The utilities of the house represent the transactional leadership behaviors. The utilities consist of the necessary and recurring management activities required to keep the house operational. Finally, the strategically distributed leadership behavior is represented by the roof of the house, as it serves as the overarching direction for all of the other structures to function.

The model represents the various styles of leadership required in today's fast-paced business environment. Leaders are challenged to integrate the different styles. An array of skills and experiences are needed to become more adaptive and responsive to change (Full-range Leadership Report, 2015)

### **The Emergence of Authentic Leadership**

While authentic leadership is a relatively new aspect of leadership, it is differentiated by two areas of emergence. The first is the practical approach, which has evolved over time through actual experiences of leaders as they navigate real world experiences and discover best practices. The second area of emergence is the theoretical approach, proposed by social scientists in response to the observations, situations, best practices, and behavior of leaders across multiple dimensions (Northouse, 2013).

There are three viewpoints to consider when attempting to characterize the notion of authentic leadership; they include: (a) the individual, (b) the relational and (c) the developmental perspectives. The individual perspective, according to Shamir and

Eilam (2005), is demonstrated as an extension of a person's true self. It is manifest by the leader's ability to lead others consistent with personal values and genuine individuality. The relational perspective, according to Eagly (2005), is demonstrated through relationship. It exists when followers perceive the leader to be influenced by the reciprocal effects between leader and follower experiences. Lastly, the developmental perspective, suggests that leadership can be cultivated and is developed in people over a lifetime of experiences (Gardner et al., 2005). These perspectives, when guided by positive psychological capacities and strong moral reasoning, result in leader behavior bound by two foundational components of authentic leadership, self-awareness, and self-regulation (Walumbwa et al., 2008).

**Practicing authentic leadership.** The core concept of authenticity is captured in Shakespeare's (1901) famous quote, "To thine own self be true" (Hamlet; Act 1; Scene iii). The phrase suggests that authenticity is embodied when an individual becomes acutely aware of who they are, accepts their strengths and weaknesses, and can experience life accordingly. When people remain faithful to their identity and core values they become more authentic (Erickson, 1995).

Robert Terry, a pioneer of authentic leadership, authored the book *Authentic Leadership: Courage in Action*. It was published in 1993 and provides a practical approach to leading authentically. Terry proposed a model that is action centered and focuses on an individual's ability to accurately frame issues and to solicit action in response to those matters. As a result of his work, Terry created a management tool he labeled the Authentic Action Wheel. The tool helps to frame problems; it addresses six specific areas: (a) Meaning, (b) Existence, (c) Resources, (d) Mission, (e) Power and (f)

Structure. Terry (1993) contends that leadership is the most honorable form of engagement. Therefore, it should be authentic and unique to the individual. It is this belief that Irvine and Reger (2006) distinguish leadership as a form of presence versus a position and where the tenets of authentic leadership reside.

While Terry's approach focuses on organizational problems and identification of appropriate action, Bill George and Peter Sims' (2007) practical approach to authentic leadership focus on developing a plan to become a more authentic leader. In the book, *True North*, George, and Sims convey their idea of what an authentic leader is. Attributes of authentic leadership include: (a) being genuine, (b) standing up for what you believe, (c) engendering trust, and (d) developing valuable relationships with others. George stresses that since there is no map or direct path for each person's leadership journey, a compass is needed to keep individuals focused on their true north or leadership purpose. The compass guides leaders in five disciplines: (a) self-awareness, (b) values, (c) motivations, (d) support team and (e) integrated life.

**Authentic leadership theory.** In 2008, Walumbwa and associates conducted a comprehensive study to create a validated measure for authentic leadership. In the study, Walumbwa et al. (2008) defined authentic leadership as:

a pattern of leader behavior that draws upon and promotes both positive psychological capacities and a positive ethical climate, to foster greater self-awareness, an internalized moral perspective, balanced processing of information, and relational transparency on the part of leaders working with followers, fostering positive self-development (p. 94).

The four constructs of the model, include self-awareness and three self-regulating components. Self-awareness is the degree of knowledge that a leader possesses of himself, including the identification of both positive and negative attributes of the leader, and an awareness of potential implications they pose to others (Kernis, 2003). Internalized moral perspective is one of the self-regulating processes, where the leader is expected to apply his moral principles and values to help guide behavior instead of succumbing to outside pressures. Balanced processing, another self-regulating process, where the leader is expected to objectively consider the opinions of others in the analysis of decision making, before making a decision. Relational transparency is the last of the self-regulating processes and relates to the leader's propensity to portray themselves as open and honest with others. The demonstration of self acknowledges both the strengths and weakness of an individual. Each of the self-regulating processes is under the control of the leader, and, therefore, can be developed and improved upon (Walumbwa et al., 2008).

Authentic leaders project transparency, are clear about their intentions and are compelled to lead within their self-defined set of boundaries. Authentic leaders understand how their values drive behavior and how their behavior influences their actions in the workplace. Authentic leaders draw upon these strengths when trying to navigate their way through complex problem solving while reinforcing and projecting a positive ethical behavior (Walumbwa et al., 2008). Authentic leadership, therefore, assumes that an excellent display of character and integrity will always take center stage (Ilies, Morgeson, & Nahrgang, 2005).

**Self-awareness.** Self-awareness is the fundamental component of the authentic leadership construct. It is the process of knowing and trusting who you are, and what you stand for. It clarifies what a person values, how they are motivated, and the emotions, capabilities, strengths and weaknesses that help guide their behavior, life, and leadership style (Kernis, 2003). Individuals with high self-awareness recognize how their feeling and emotions can impact their actions and can make the necessary adjustments. Goleman (1998) attributes candor and realistic assessment of performance to individuals with high self-awareness; because they know what they want and what they need to do to get there. Additionally, self-aware individuals can poke fun at themselves when they fall short of expectations. They value performance feedback and the opportunity to evaluate potential opportunities for improvement. Self-aware people trust themselves, their abilities, and present themselves with an air of confidence and capability. Self-awareness according to Kernis (2003), is a contributing factor to an individual's psychological well-being.

**Internalized moral perspective.** The component of the authentic leadership construct relates to the development of excellent character and virtue. It represents a leader's ability to exert high levels of self-regulation. A leader's reputation and the degree of trust afforded to the leader from their constituents is proportional to this capability.

**Self-regulation.** The process is used by individuals to maintain self-control, it involves establishing standards, identifying discrepancies and proposing appropriate action for remediation. It is the process that authentic leaders use to ensure that their values, intentions, behavior and action all line up (Stajkovic & Luthans, 1998). Tett

and Burnett (2003) offer that authentic leaders possess personality traits enabling them to operate as their own social force, immune to situational and environmental influences that could negatively affect their behaviors. They lead by the internal forces that originate from their personality and deeply held beliefs. Conversely, less authentic leaders may sway due to external influences such as rewards systems, organizational recognition, and social status.

*Trust and reputation.* Authentic leaders maintain high levels of trust and reputation. Stakeholders who recognize these attributes tend to be more trusting of leaders they believe will advance their interests. Therefore, leader reputation influences the ability to trust, shaping the leader's degree of accountability (Hall, Blass, Ferris, & Massengale, 2004).

Reputation is a perceptual identity that reflects the blending of multiple attributes, including a person's character, attitude, and reported behavior from observers (Ferris et al., 2003). Reputation exerts its influence in the form of self-esteem and identity, which then translates into demonstrated behavior and social interactions (Hall et al., 2004). Reputation serves as a predictor of a leader's future behavior. Leaders with positive reputations tend to be regarded with a higher degree of trust, tend to be supervised less, and may even result in lower levels of accountability than their peers. As individuals share their impressions of each other, the opinions reveal themselves into a common idea that serves to influence the behavior and actions of a group. Therefore, leader trust and reputation remain an outstanding quality for all constituents (Hall et al., 2004).

Lack of authenticity in organizations may allow for a disproportionate amount of flexibility that could increase the risk of susceptibility to giving into social pressures and expectations (Seeman, 1960 as cited in Spitzmuller & Ilies, 2010). Organizations should ensure that adequate measures are in place to offset the vulnerability to these risks. Implications of little trust and reputation in a leader might unintentionally lead to an environment where dysfunctional behavior on behalf of its leader is promoted (Hall et al., 2004).

***Balanced processing of information.*** The component that refers to the leader's ability to synthesize intelligence free of bias or judgment, particularly information that relates to their individual characteristics, abilities, and shortcomings (Kernis, 2003). As a self-regulating process, authentic leaders can solicit information from others, even when in disagreement. Information is gathered from multiple sources, analyzed, and objectively considered before decision making. The approach provides the leader with the ability to engage others and to consider alternate points of view. It also displays the leader's willingness to listen and ask for help, when needed (Northouse, 2013).

***Relational transparency.*** Relational transparency is the component of authentic leadership most relevant to developing high quality, long lasting relationships. Leaders who possess high relational authenticity, value trust, and work diligently to develop a relationship with their followers, thus, affording them the benefits of a positive reputation (Ilies et al., 2005). Reiss and Patrick (1996) assert that "Authentic relationships involve a reciprocal process of self-disclosure and mutual intimacy and trust" (as cited in Kernis & Goldman, 2006, p. 301) and build as leaders demonstrate their inner desires and expectations through transparent and authentic behavior. Through authentic relational

transparency, leaders will experience more positive relationships, characterized by absolute trust. Through their open exchange, leaders will also benefit from increased learning and development (Ilies et al., 2005).

Interpersonal relationships among authentic leaders and followers may experience less conflict and more stability. Authentic leaders are likely to possess higher self-awareness and more consistent behavioral patterns. Additionally, followers are more apt to identify with their leaders, resulting in better communication, more acceptable and agreed upon decision making, and increased collaboration (Spitzmuller & Ilies, 2010).

Consistency between leader values, moral code, and leader actions may be satisfying to the leader and serve as a vehicle for building an interpersonal relationship with followers. However, the real contest of an authentic relational leader is the ability to engage a group of followers (Burns, 1978; Yukl, 2002). Authentic leaders are expected to engage their followers in growth opportunities that challenge their critical thinking abilities and test their mental models (Spitzmuller & Ilies, 2010). Leader authenticity and integrity must be recognizable to the collective, for it to positively affect the degree of influence the leader has to that group (Fields, 2007).

Relationally effective leaders create productive and enduring relationships at work. In doing so, they collectively experience mutual learning that serves to benefit the relationship of both the individuals and the collective. These mutual learning experiences act as a strong motivating influence that enhances follower self-concept, through personal identification with their leader (Ilies et al., 2005).



Followers also struggle with self-discovery and the practice of authenticity. Authentic relational leaders recognize this and realize that it is through role modeling that followers can achieve their degree of authenticity. The leader's ability to influence followers depends on the leader's ongoing demonstration of trustworthiness, reinforcement of value-based relationships, and preservation of a reputation for behaving consistently with their morally held values (Spitzmuller & Ilies, 2010).

**Contributing factors.** Influence on authentic leadership development comes from many contributing factors including (a) emotional competence, (b) interpretation of life-stories and (c) enactment of the true self. Emotional competence focuses primarily on the display of emotion that is fitting for a particular situation (Oakley, 2000). Interpretation of life-stories allows the leader to narrate a series of life events into a relevant and inspiring message (Sparrowe, 2005). The portrayal of one's true self is the individual expression of identity through both emotional and physical attributes (Ladkin & Taylor, 2010).

**Emotional competence.** Emotion is a primary element in the formation of attitudes and human behavior. It has been a popular topic of study for the past decade in an attempt to gain insight into organizational behavior patterns. Most importantly, how can leaders leverage their emotions to create and maintain a positive emotional climate in the workplace? Tension exists for leaders today, as they attempt to navigate between demonstrating and encouraging healthy emotional expression, especially in corporate cultures where suppressing emotion is the norm (Ashkanasy & Daus, 2002).

Goleman (2005) differentiates emotional intelligence from emotional competence as the potential for learning the fundamentals of self-mastery, from the mastering of that

potential in their expression of self in the workplace. Emotional competence has become a practical strategy to improve social awareness, relationships, and expression of authenticity in the role of leadership. Oakley (1992) expresses the moral importance of experiencing emotion at the degree of intensity that is appropriate for the situation. Especially, since an over exaggerated display of emotion can portray individuals as unstable or impaired, reinforcing the perceived need to suppress emotion at work.

Authentic leaders model healthy emotional expression and can “read” and “interpret” the emotional climate of their employees. They can genuinely empathize with their followers while communicating with vision and enthusiasm. Understanding and considering the emotional concerns of followers can have positive implications, especially as the team is establishing their identity and group guidelines (Ashkanasy & Daus, 2002). Emotions help to enhance the experience and perception of life (Frijda, Manstead, & Bem, 2000).

***Life-stories.*** Authenticity emerges from the autobiographical account of one’s life experiences, in addition to the discovery of one’s self-awareness, values, and a sense of purpose (Sparrowe, 2005). Sparrowe (2005) draws upon the interpretive thinking of Ricoeur (1992), who defines one’s identity as an accumulation of life’s experiences, motivations, and actions into the telling of a story.

Ricoeur (1992) states that:

Authenticity cannot be meaningful if the self is empty of character, but it cannot be real if it ignores the dynamics of lived experience. It is the narrative self that unites character and self-constancy: Narrative identity makes the two ends of

the chain link up with one another: the permanence in time of character and that of self-constancy (p.166).

Ricoeur (1992) considers emplotment (construction of a series of events) as the primary process for a narrative self-construction. He emphasizes that since the narrative is one's recollection, it is subject to bias since the storyteller has been selective in recounting the events contained in the narrative. Stories provide the authentic leaders with the means to convey values, purpose, and experiences in a perspective of experiencing life over time. Narratives provide an opportunity to establish commonality between followers and also to provide context about the leader to the follower.

***Enacting the true self.*** How a leader physically embodies his "true self" is critical in determining the degree of authenticity conveyed by the leader. It requires a deep understanding of self and a natural tendency to emulate behavior that is morally and ethically sound. As such, Ladkin and Taylor (2010) propose leader enactments as a means to effectively express the core self and thus be interpreted as "authentic."

Additionally, Ladkin and Taylor (2010) claim that "it is the leader's body, and the way he or she uses it to express their 'true self,' that is the seemingly invisible mechanism through which authenticity is conveyed to others" (p. 65). Wilson (1988) explains that the inner-self relies on emotional reactions, in the form of physical bodily responses. Examples include: turning flush when embarrassed, hair on your arm standing on edge when overwhelmed by emotion, or the feeling of a hole in your stomach when overwhelmed with panic or fear. Also existing, is the externally oriented experience of self that relies on symbolic processes, such as language, stories, family,

organizational structures, gestures, and facial expressions. These external interactions are the events that our behavior responds to and is the way that the world sees us.

The concept of enacting “true self” can be described as the merging of the personality with the “self” created from external contexts. The art of “acting” may be an approach to consider as an effective expression of authentic leadership, despite how the term seems to contradict the intent behind authentic leadership (Ladkin & Taylor, 2010, p. 67). In the acting profession, actors need to express the feeling and emotions of the character portrayed, for the scenes to appear real versus fake.

Stanislavski’s method of acting, created in 1936, was a system developed to help actors tap into their inner self, to feel the emotions and experiences during their acting. The result is a more lifelike portrayal of the situation or event. “Through the System, actors learn natural laws and how to use them consciously in re-creating human behavior on stage” (Moore, 1984, p. 9). Stanislavski's system involves three stages: (a) memory of emotions, (b) the ‘magic if’ and (c) physical problems (Clurman, 1972). Applying Stanislavski’s three stages of acting in a leadership context requires that the authentic leader: (a) draw from his or her own life events in order to understand, feel, and experience the particular event or situation; (b) foster communion with followers by practicing awareness and being respectful of “in the moment” attention; and (c) practice ways of expressing feeling in various contexts in order to be perceived as being real (Ladkin & Taylor, 2010).

## **Gender and Leadership**

Men and women acquire unique abilities, behaviors, and personalities. Origin theories investigate the reasons or causes for these distinctions and represent a large portion of Archer's work (1996). Origin theories claim that sex differences result from behavior influenced by biological, social, and psychological processes. The two origin theories are known as evolutionary psychology (Buss, 1995; Hyde, 2014) and social structural theory (Eagly, 1987; Hyde, 2014; Ridgeway, 1991).

**Evolutionary psychology.** Evolutionary psychologists argue that the evolved tendencies of each sex are a result of adaptations to the physical and social environments of prehistoric times of hunter-gatherer groups (Buss, 1995). The differences between the genders are grounded in the strategies each sex used to ensure survival and procreation. Theories of sexual selection (Darwin, 1871) are used to explain the differences in human behavior for each sex; with competition and mate selection applying to males and females respectively.

Men in their effort to secure the opportunity to produce offspring, engaged in competition with other males, to acquire a female partner for reproduction. Females, however, participated in a careful selection process in their effort to secure a partner that was willing to assist in the child rearing process. The process of selection engaged by females contributed to the intense competition among males (Eagly & Wood, 1999). Men and women assume different roles in procreation that influence the strategies they used to be successful. Males engaged in short-term and promiscuous mating behavior (Buss & Schmitt, 1993), whereas, females chose a more long-term and selective mating behavior (Eagly & Wood, 1999). Questions of paternity and a women's ability to

conceal pregnancy may have been a reason that males engaged in sexual jealousy and felt the need to control women and their sexuality (Daly & Wilson, 1998 as cited in Eagly & Wood, 1999; Friedman, Bleske, Scheyd, 2000). A female's preference to nurture increased the desire for women to acquire partners that would provide parental support and engage in a long term relationship (Eagly & Wood, 1999).

Understanding the differences between the sexes is described by evolutionary psychologist Buss and Kenrick (1998) as a metatheory; claiming that each sex has adapted over time, according to their specific domains. Additionally, they argue that the behavior of each sex that has evolved should be considered a prediction of central tendency of each sex. Where sex-differentiated behavior is expected to be similar, but not exact for all human societies (Eagly & Wood, 1999).

**Social structural theory.** Social structural theory focuses on the differences between male and females, as they relate to the social positions they occupy. Biological features commonly dictate social positions (Eagly, 1987; Hyde 2014). For example, men gifted with strength and size are afforded positions relying on physical activity. Whereas, women possessing the role of childbearing assume positions relating to child care.

The coupling of biological attributes to roles provides efficiencies in productivity and serve to establish a division of labor in the social structure. (Eagly & Wood, 1999). Men have typically assumed positions of status and power. When differences between the status of male and females emerged, the situation most often favored men due to their projection of strength (Ridgeway, 1991).

The primary social structural metatheory assumes the allocation of men and women into particular social roles. When males assume positions bearing power and status, they respond with dominant behavior, described as controlling and autocratic. Women subsequently respond by taking up a subordinate role, characterized by behavior that is compliant and cooperative (Ridgeway & Diekema, 1992).

The secondary social structural metatheory assumes that individuals will adapt their behavior and acquire skills and resources necessary to perform their appropriate social role, for example, women, acquiring domestic expertise and men learning a trade (Eagly & Wood, 1999). Communal and agentic traits are related to each of the roles (Eagly, 1987; Eagly 1997). Females in their effort to accommodate their role in society will take on a pattern of behavior that is interpersonal and cooperative, while males adjust by adopting a pattern of assertion and dominance (Eagly & Steffen, 1984).

Gender roles have emerged as a means to identify the expected characteristics required to perform the particular sex-typical tasks, associated with the prescribed social roles (Eagly & Karau, 2002). Gender roles also serve to generalize or stereotype the characteristics of males and females. Gender stereotypes and expectations are then communicated and commonly understood across social structures (Feingold, 1994). Once internalized, the gender role serves as a guide for self-regulation (Eagly, 1997; Wood, Christensen, Hebl & Rothgerber, 1997).

Social scientists have provided an overlapping collection of theories, in an attempt to explain biological and social structural gender differences. Efforts to determine how these differences affect individual behavior have resulted in a realization that no standard social science model exists (Tooby & Cosmides, 1992) to provide the

reasons for sex-differentiated behavior. Instead, the theories serve only to illustrate the aspects of the psychological and social processes that are responsible for the behavior (Eagly, 1997).

**The glass ceiling.** In 1986, the Wall Street Journal introduced the metaphor known as the glass ceiling. The phenomenon represents the invisible barriers that both women and minorities face when trying to advance their careers (Carli & Eagly, 2001; Debashish & Lenka, 2016; Ridgeway, 2001). Barriers associated with the phenomenon may be the result of (a) employee recruiting, retention, and promotion practices; (b) stereotyping and leadership preference, and (c) cultural and structural norms (Oakley, 2000).

A study of 1,200 women in Fortune 100 companies suggests that obstacles inhibiting progression are unintended and appear to be the result of gender-related behaviors in organizations (Townsend, 1997). Gender-related differences link to either biology, socialization, or structural/cultural accounts (Lueptow, Garovich-Szabo, Lueptow, 2001). Biological differences are not applicable to leadership differences between male and female leaders. However, societal expectations are. According to Wood & Eagly (2002), societal expectations are the most significant contributor to leadership differences between genders. More importantly are the implications of socialization that takes place during the developmental life experiences of early education and work life (Bartol, Martin, & Kromkowski, 2003).

Two theories have emerged within the structural/cultural explanation of gender differences. Both attempt to explain the biases that exist in the evaluation of female leaders. Social role theory asserts that leadership behavioral differences result from



conformance to the gender functions. In organizations, leaders are expected to conform to job roles according to the organization's hierarchical structure (Eagly, 1987). Simultaneously, these leaders are also supposed to adhere to the socially accepted norms attributed to their gender role. Bias occurs during the evaluation of women, and when a mismatch exists between the rater's stereotype about women and their leadership expectations (Forsyth, Heiney, & Wright, 1997). Expectation states theory asserts that leadership behavioral differences result when performance expectations associated with males and females are in different degrees of status (Ridgeway, 2001). Bias exists in the evaluation of women leaders, due to the perceived lower status of women compared to men (Ridgeway, 2001). Gender, as a status characteristic, leads to gender inequalities when: (a) incongruity of traits exist between genders, (b) when males are more positively elevated, and (c) when more favorable characteristics are associated with males than females. Varying degrees of gender status beliefs in organizations cause conflicting expectations, resulting in interpersonal strife among constituents and contribute to the perpetuation of the glass ceiling (Ridgeway, 2001).

Additional perspectives regarding the explanation and persistence of the glass ceiling include the work of Kanter (1977). Kanter (1977) suggests that intentional barriers exist in organizations that reject change, are risk averse and subscribe to conformity. In these organizations, women, and minorities are considered outsiders. Their "token" status subjects them to disproportionate scrutiny and intentional alienation. Women rarely possess the power to influence and advance, since their access to key senior decision makers known as "The Good Ole Boys" is limited (Morrison, White, van Velsor & Leadership, 1987). Morrison and von Glinow (1990) and Morrison et al.

(1992), however, subscribe to the idea that the glass ceiling is a result of the differences in abilities, skills, and level of education typically attributed to each sex. Attitudes, in particular, are identified as key differentiators, considering women are less likely to be assertive in their quest for advancement and tend to be more conservative in their decision making.

Despite various factors that contribute to the glass ceiling, some argue its existence is temporary and that a leveling out of the workforce will take place. The perspective is known as the “pipeline perspective” (Helfat, Harris, Wolfson, 2006; Tharenou, 1999). The pipeline view assumes that as retirements persist, the existing female middle management workforce will advance into senior positions. Additionally, it implies that female graduates prepare and aspire to assume careers in executive ranks (Ezzedeen, Budworth & Baker, 2015).

A study conducted by Ezzedeen et al., (2015) set out to challenge the assumptions of the “pipeline perspective,” arguing that given the challenges that women face, a ready-made pipeline of recruits may not exist. Participants of the study included pre-career females. A discourse analysis format was used, involving focus groups of two to eight members. Fourteen focus groups were conducted to explore: (a) the participant’s career intentions, (b) their attitudes toward executive work, and (c) the perceived barriers that exist for women aspiring to advance into the executive ranks. Results of the study indicated that pre-career women are attracted to the challenge and perceived recognition associated with the idea of executive level work. They were acutely aware of the barriers that exist, should they decide to embark upon this career path, specifically as it relates to advancement, career anxieties, family expectations and

career-family balance. Finally, the results revealed that the participants have a clear understanding of the choices that face the working woman. Expense family for career or career for family, some, however, attempt to attain a balance between the two.

Perhaps, the most significant finding of the study is the participant's belief that the glass ceiling persists because of individual limitations and preferences, instead of the traditional organizational structure and culture. These participants reflected a genuine desire to control their career, to either accept the conditions and barriers of an executive job or not. The findings of the study support the awareness and acceptance of obstacles as a means to determine career expectations and personal choice (Schweitzer, Ng, Lyons & Kuron, 2011).

### **Women in Leadership**

Despite impressive qualifications and experience, women remain challenged in their efforts to alter the leadership paradigm in corporate America. For decades the majority of senior leadership positions in the United States have been primarily occupied by males instead of females (Debashish & Lenka, 2016; Weyer, 2007). Reasons for the dynamic have been debated and appear to be the consequence of unconscious gender biases in both societies and the organizational environments (Kaiser & Wallace, 2016; Weyer, 2007). Gender bias suppresses the penetration of women into leadership roles, particularly the advancement of women into senior corporate positions (Weyer, 2007).

Catalyst reports that limited progress has been made advancing the representation of women on S&P 500 board of directors and that even less progress is being made establishing a pipeline of female officers and directors for the future. The

findings reported in the newly released 2015 Catalyst Census state that men represent 80.1% of S&P 500 board seats compared to the 19.9% held by women. Additionally, Directorship positions are reported at 73.1% male compared to women at only 26.9% (Catalyst Census, 2016).

The census also presents a demographic representation of women in the workforce across all the S&P 500 companies. Among the 44.3% of women that make up the workforce only 4.2% of the women hold CEO's positions, 25.1% hold senior executive level and manager positions and 36.4% hold first to midlevel management positions (Catalyst Census, 2016). The report confirms the overrepresentation of men in leadership positions despite attempted gender diversity efforts.

**The “ideal worker” and role congruity theory.** Integration of women into the leadership pipeline requires a clear understanding of the challenges women face in the context of identity, work-life, family life, and leadership development. Women leaders have difficulty synthesizing these dimensions into a cohesive image of self (Bierema, 2016). Deeply held gender roles in society and the masculine stereotyping of the “ideal worker” that places career above family, health and personal life further complicate the undertaking (Reid, 2015).

The image of the “ideal worker” is a patriarchal picture of a man, where individuals are expected to commit 100% devotion to the organization (Reid, 2015). A career path for the “ideal worker” is continuous and often plagued with long hours and high expectations. Individuals who attempt to conform to the “ideal worker” image are expected to adjust their personal life around their work life (Kelly, Ammons, Chermack & Moen, 2010). The “ideal worker” image embraced by organizations lies in direct

contrast to the socialized gender role expectation of women as caregivers and mothers (Cha, 2013).

The contrast in expectations causes prejudice in the workplace for females. Role congruity theory suggests that the differences between the “ideal worker” image and the male stereotype of leadership with the gender role of females, influences others to perceive women as inferior to men (Eagly and Karau, 2002). The fact that leadership has been historically a male dominated career as seen in politics, the military and corporate America serves to strengthen the perception.

Eagly and Karau (2002) performed an analysis of existing empirical evidence to determine if the prejudice caused by role incongruity contributes to the glass ceiling phenomenon and the underrepresentation of women in senior leadership positions. The analysis was designed to determine if: (a) female leaders are perceived less favorably than male leaders, (b) if women experience more difficulty in attaining leadership positions, and (c) if it is harder for women to be perceived as effective in a leadership role. The significance of the analysis contributes to the evolution of content that should be used to define future leadership roles. Leadership positions that promote more shared characteristics and less agentic characteristics would help to alleviate the disparity between the roles, thus reducing prejudice and promoting more appreciation for the contributions that female leaders offer (Eagly & Karau, 2002).

Two of the most significant research studies used to determine if female leaders are perceived less favorably than male leaders include Gallup polls and surveys conducted by Harvard Business Review. The Gallup Polls asked participants if they preferred male or female bosses, and covered a timespan from 1953 to 2000. The

results indicate a strong preference from both men and women participants for male bosses (Powell, 2011; Simmons, 2001). The Harvard Business Review surveys conducted in 1965, and then again in 1985, asked participants to rate their attitude toward women in management using a five-point scale ranging from strongly unfavorable to strongly favorable. The results reveal that bias still exists in 1985, however, not as strongly as in 1965 (Bowman, Worthy & Greyser, 1965; Sutton & Moore, 1985). These findings, coupled with additional works were consistent with the prediction. The authors conclude that prejudice as a result of role incongruity cause female leaders to be perceived as less favorable than male leaders (Eagly & Karau, 2002).

The authors pursued three areas of research to determine if women experience more difficulty attaining leader positions than men. They investigated: (a) wage and promotion, (b) hiring practices, and (c) agentic behavior. The first study was a meta-analysis on wages; it consisted of 41 studies (Stanley & Jarrell, 1989). The authors determined that while wage discrimination against women had decreased, it remains a legitimate concern for females (Bayard, Hellerstein, Neumark & Troske, 2003). According to the 2015 Department of Labor wage statistics, full-time women workers in 2014 earned only 83% of male employees (U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics, 2016). For promotions, Reskin & Ross (1995) reported that females possess less authority and responsibility than their male counterparts, limiting their access to expanded roles of authority and their opportunity for promotion (Lyness & Thompson, 1997).

The Goldberg (1968) paradigm experiments were used to determine whether bias existed in the hiring of females. These tests used both female and male names on

identical resumes or applications for evaluation by prospective employers. A meta-analysis consisting of 49 articles and dissertations reveals that for male sex-typed jobs, such as leadership jobs, males were commonly preferred over women (Davison & Burke, 2000).

The last area of analysis studied the use of agentic type behavior by females in the form of self-promotion and confidence. Self-promotion is used to project a sense of confidence and control when involved in the interview process. However, this may not be true for women. Rudman (1998) conducted a study evaluating both males and females on their projection of self-confidence through self-promotion. Results indicated that when women self-promote, they tend to be liked less and may even appear less attractive to the male counterpart. Carli (1990) conducted studies of confidence and tentativeness in presentation skills. She found that when tentative women presented to a male audience, the women were considered more trustworthy than the confident women. Conversely, for female audiences, the confident women were perceived as more influential. The findings suggest that prejudice as an outcome of role congruity theory lessen women's access to leadership positions.

Eagly, Karau, and Makhijani (1995) conducted a meta-analysis of 96 studies to assess the perception of women as being effective in a leadership role. Women scored below males in effectiveness when leadership positions in the organization were predominately male dominated. They also scored less efficient as the number of male subordinates increased and when the number of male evaluators increased. Women scored considerably less effective in traditionally male environments but scored effectively in roles of middle manager positions. The results were consistent with the

prediction of the role congruity theory of prejudice supporting the claim that perceptions of effectiveness are harder for women than men.

Many suggestions have been offered to help alleviate the discrimination that exists in organizations, as a result of the gender roles and the male stereotype of leadership. Kelly et al. (2010) suggest that the "ideal worker" image be replaced with a new model that focuses on a leader's ability to meet goals and who is afforded the latitude to arrange his work schedule around other life priorities. Efforts to remove prejudice and to encourage egalitarian processes requires an evaluation of leaders based on their ability to accomplish tasks, build teams, develop others and promote success (Powell, 2011).

**Challenges.** Essentialism is a term used to describe the cognitive bias inherent in gender stereotyping. It describes the mental process of making assumptions based on similar and static characteristics of sex. These assumptions help individuals navigate their way in society and culture (Prentice & Miller, 2006). For women leaders, essentialism is a challenge, since the process takes place in comparison to males. Consequently, the expectations are predisposed for men and tend to be unnatural for women. In the workplace, the image of the "ideal worker" serves as an example of essentialism and is the cause for much of the inequities in organizations as they relate to male and female expectations and character identity (Reid, 2015).

Essentialism adds complexity to the expectations of women in the workplace since the expectations contradict both the behavior of the female gender stereotype and the image of the "ideal worker." Gender stereotyping is one of the most significant obstacles that women face in corporate leadership. The double bind that women face in



either meeting the leadership expectations or the female gender role expectations is alive and well (Catalyst, 2007).

The inability for women to authentically conform to the masculine defined expectations of these stereotypes causes the conversation regarding women to be projected in a non-favorable manner (Stead & Elliott, 2009). The discourse commonly used, portrays women as weak and lacking in comparison to the male counterpart. The differences between the two genders promote dominance of the male gender and contribute to the lack of confidence exhibited by women leaders (Bierema, 2016).

In 2010, the Institute of Leadership and Management conducted a study on leader confidence and self-doubt. Males reported a 70% confidence rating compared to women's 50% and reported a 31% self-doubt rating compared to women's 50%. According to Bain & Company (Coffman & Neunfeldt, 2014), women entered the workforce optimistic and inspired to reach senior management. The number reported at 43% of women versus 34% for men also entering the workforce, confidence levels in their ability to attain these positions were about the same, 27% and 28% respectively. The survey consisted of 1,000 males and females and revealed that by year two, the percentage of women aspiring for senior management has declined from 43% to 16%, while the male percentage remained stable at 34%. Additionally, confidence levels also dropped. Women experienced a 50% decrease from 27% to 13% while men saw an 11% decrease from 28% to 25%. Women's drop in aspiration and confidence stems from doubt in her ability to meet the organization's expectations of the male stereotype of a leader. (Coffman & Neunfeldt, 2014).

Opposition to the masculine view of leadership and the "ideal worker" is in order, however, changing a culture and the deeply held beliefs of gender is not an easy feat. Culture represents the entire organization and change at that level takes time. Creating a culture where diversity in leadership style is accepted, is not only optimal, it is becoming a differentiator in the ability to acquire talent. An approach that may seem palatable would include: (a) an awareness of alternatives, (b) an acknowledgment that gender stereotyping exists, and (c) a willingness to adjust organizational norms (Bierema 2016).

Stead and Elliott (2009) conducted an in-depth study of nine female leaders, to better understand the natural tendencies and leadership qualities commonly exhibited by women. They found that dimensions outside the workplace influence female leadership styles. Organizations should strive to provide an environment that fosters a leadership style that acknowledges these different dimensions and places a high value on life balance while promoting flexibility (Servon & Visser, 2011). Differences in style do not necessarily equate to less efficient. Reframing how leadership is discussed and committing to be open to suggestion is a first big step in changing perceptions and forming a common understanding of what gender neutral leadership looks like (Bierema, 2016).

Leadership effectiveness is context driven and situational (Ford, 2010; Nica, 2013). Effective leaders are expected to respond with strategies that are most appropriate for a particular situation. Since a leader's identity is a composite of individual life experiences, perhaps the view of leadership should shift from a collection

of attributes and behaviors to a process that enables leaders to address challenges based upon their self-narrative (Nica, 2013).

**Social costs.** An examination of the challenges that female leaders face would not be complete without an investigation of the social cost that women also endure. Tower and Alkadry (2008), conducted a study on the social costs that women experience as their career progresses. The study included 1600 public servants and compared via a survey women and men at various stages of their career. The topics included: child care, marriage, household responsibilities, and divorce.

Working women must manage the conflict between societal expectations of family and the “ideal worker” image. However, it is not without consequences; women take more time off work to care for children and relatives as compared to men (Pyle & Pelletier, 2003). Additionally, it is estimated that when children are born, men on average take only six and a half days off work, compared to women who on average take 12 weeks (Fieldman, Sussman & Zigler, 2004). These findings affirm that working women continue to carry the bulk of infant care, which can disadvantage the working women.

Both women and men are choosing to delay marriage (Goldstein & Kenney, 2001). One of the reasons for the delay is the perceived inability to manage both career and family (Frazier, Arikian, Benson, Losoff & Maurer, 1996). However, other reasons may point to socioeconomic statuses such as school, career progression, and annual income (Bachrach, Hindin, & Thomson, 2000). Goldstein and Kenney (2001) assert that the majority of women do in fact marry and suggest that the delay in marrying is primarily due to education and career priorities.

A study of 395 college students indicated that women were more driven to marry than men, and non-working women were more driven to marry than the working women. Parenthood and the concern for appearances to others served as key motivators for marriage (Blakemore, Lawton & Vartanian, 2005). Conversely, some women choose to forego marriage altogether, due to the disproportionate amount of responsibility between men and women who attempt to juggle careers and family (Bachrach et al., 2000).

Women have historically been charged with the duties of housework, as these tasks align with traditional gender roles and societal expectations. On average women in the United States spend 19 hours performing housework, compared to husbands 10 hours (Bianchi, Milkie & Sayer, 2000). For women who work, the 19 hours of unpaid work is in addition to their typical 40 hour work week. Causing a substantial burden that increases pressure both at work and at home. Economic theory predicts that in households where women work, the distribution of housework is more equitable, but only when they make up to 50% of the family income. Once the income of the women exceeds 50%, the distribution of housework reverts to a traditional distribution (Bittman, England, Folbre, Matheson & Sayer, 2003).

Unequal distribution of housework and childcare among married couples negatively impacts the quality of marriage for women. The added pressure of work strains the relationship, increasing the couple's chance of divorce (Frisco & Williams, 2003). Moreover, women who work produce an income that provides financial independence, making it easier for them to choose divorce rather than withstand the struggles of inequity (Bremmer & Kesselring, 2004).

**Leadership styles.** Women are disadvantaged when leadership is viewed in masculine terms and perform less efficiently in male-dominated environments, such as military settings. Similarly, males perform less efficiently in situations where leadership is less masculine, such as educational organizations (Eagly et al., 1995). Current trends of preferred leadership styles in organizations may offer a more level playing field in the future.

Given that women tend to be more emotionally expressive, displaying acts of compassion and concern, it is not surprising that they prefer the transformational style of leadership (Mascia, 2015). Women apply their talents in a way that promotes relationship and collaboration (Eisner, 2013; Tannen, 1994). Enabling them to motivate followers to work together to achieve goals (Rosener, 1990).

Men are described as self-assertive, displaying characteristics of competition. Therefore, it seems natural for them to lean toward a more transactional style of leadership (Mascia, 2015). Men apply their skills in a way that demonstrates power and task accomplishment (Eisner, 2013; Tannen, 1994), enabling them to leverage performance. Followers compete with one another and receive rewards for their performance (Rosener, 1990).

Research indicates that genders seem to gravitate to a particular style of leadership. When comparing leadership styles between genders, there is a tendency for women to display a democratic posture. They influence by exerting their personal power through social interaction. Conversely, men tend to display a more autocratic position, influencing by command and control methods and exercising positional power (Eagly & Johnson, 1990; Rosener, 1990).

Leadership literature suggests that organizations are shifting toward a more “transformational” style of leadership. They are departing from the autocratic style for a more participative, collaborative approach that emphasizes interpersonal skills and emotional intelligence (Mascia, 2015; Offermann & Gowing, 1990). According to Bass (1990), these skills are necessary if leaders are to leverage relationships to inspire their employees.

Transformational leaders possess an internal locus of control, believing that their ability to influence is an outcome of their efforts. They are self-confident, stable, and responsible individuals with clear goals (Bass & Avolio, 1997, Mandell & Pherwani, 2003) Transformational leaders motivate and encourage others toward a shared vision by serving as role models with high integrity. They inspire trust and respect from their constituents by displaying an authentic concern for others (Mascia, 2015). Further, transformational leaders are more effective in achieving high employee satisfaction, group performance and organizational results (Bass 1997; Eagly, 2007; Hater & Bass, 1988; Keller, 1995).

The shift from transactional leadership to transformational is seen by many as an opportunity to generate more management positions for women and has been coined as the “gender advantage” (Eisner, 2013; Offerman & Gowing, 1990). The advantage refers to the overwhelming parallels between the image of the transformational leader and the behavior typically exhibited by women (Mascia, 2015). While the benefit may help to construct a new vision of the “ideal worker” and serve to reshape the gendered images of leadership, it has not manifested itself into a competitive advantage to improve the underrepresentation of women in management positions (Mascia, 2015).

The shift has resulted, however, in efforts to blend each of the dominant gender-based behaviors into a new stereotypical view of leadership practices by recognizing the feminine aspects of leadership with the attribute of “consideration” and the masculine aspect of leadership with “structuring” (Vechio, 2002).

Studies have determined that there is no difference between men and women in the effectiveness of transformational leadership (Eagly & Johnson, 1990). Instead, transformational leadership effectiveness is dependent upon individualized characteristics, such as personality, experience, and organizational culture, and not gender related behaviors (Mascia, 2015). The research, however, does not apply to emotional intelligence. Studies conducted in 1996, 1999, and again in 2003 indicate that male and female profiles of emotional intelligence are different and that women score higher. Higher scores suggest that perhaps females are better than men at managing emotions of both themselves and others (Mandell & Pherwani, 2003; Mayer & Geher, 1996; Mayer, Caruso & Salovey, 1999).

Emotional intelligence is a key differentiator in a leader’s ability to connect with their followers. Given similar skills in knowledge and ability, it is the emotional connection that leaders establish with their followers that lead to trust and confidence (Mandell & Pherwani, 2003). Transformational leadership and emotional intelligence share many characteristics. However, the most critical element is trust. Bass (1990) asserts that trust is an essential component of transformational leadership, while Cooper (1997) identified trust as the most critical element of emotional intelligence.

Leadership styles are not intended to prescribe the exact behavior for practicing leadership, just as gender should not be used to dictate the strengths and weaknesses

of men and women. Assessments of hiring and promotion should be based on the ability to achieve outcomes and to do it in a manner that is true to their individuality (Porterfield & Kleiner, 2005). Women have illustrated their capacity to lead despite the challenges of the past. Today, many of the restrictions have been lessened, providing more opportunity for the future generation of women leaders (Eagly, 2003).

**Generational differences.** Today's workforce consists of three very distinct generations of workers, known as the Baby Boomers, Generation X, and Generation Y/Millennials. Each generation experiences a series of social and historical events that serve to influence their thought and behavior (Jurkiewicz & Brown, 1998). Awareness of the perceptions held by each generation could provide insight to leaders as they attempt to manage intergenerational conflict in the workplace (Dittmann, 2005; Sessa, Kabacoff, Deal & Brown, 2007).

Baby Boomers were born between the years of 1946 and 1964, making them currently between 52 and 70 years old. Events that had a profound influence on their lives include: (a) the Vietnam War, (b) the Kennedy assassinations, (c) the Civil Rights Movement, and (d) the Feminist Movement (Schullery, 2013). On a social level, this generation has grown up in traditionally structured families whose life has been shaped by the introduction of television. Workers from the Baby Boomer generation tend to dedicate their lives to their jobs with their loyalty extending to one company for their entire careers (Tapscott, 2009).

GenXers were born between the years of 1965 and 1981, making them currently between the ages of 35 and 51. The dramatic increase in the rate of divorce in the United States in the 1970s and 1980s led to an increase in single-parent households,



dual-income families, and “latchkey kids.” A stark change from the traditional family structure of the Baby Boomers’ childhoods. GenXers grew up watching Sesame Street and the fall of the Berlin Wall. Their social context largely influenced by the beginning of the AIDS epidemic (Twenge et al., 2010). Despite a dramatic decline in birthrates in the 1970s that shrunk the size of GenX by 15%, in the workplace, GenXers were confronted with high unemployment and stiff competition for jobs, as Baby Boomers had filled most positions (Tapscott, 2009).

The GenY/Millennial generation was born between the years of 1982 and 1999, making them currently between 17 and 35 years old. Significant experiences include the advent of the Internet, the rise in school shootings, the terrorist attacks on September 11, 2001, increased use of video games, and widespread media coverage of corporate scandals (Oblinger, 2003). They have grown up accustomed to 24/7 access to information and a culture of constant praise and recognition (Tapscott, 2009). The growing predominance of school shootings spawned a style of parenting known as “Helicopter parenting.” These parents became overly involved in their children’s lives attempting to protect their children from everything life-threatening to hurt feelings and failing grades (Tulgan, 2009).

According to Miller, Hodge, Brandt, & Schneider (2013), Millennials will make up approximately 36% of the U.S. workforce by 2014, 50% by 2020, and possibly 75% by 2025. Millennials are the most highly educated generation. These individuals are expected to move quickly up the professional ladder into the ranks of management.

Members of the Society for Human Resource Management (SHRM) were solicited to provide a list of character traits for each of the generations. The Baby

Boomer generation, described as hard working, results driven individuals who were accepting of authority and tended to possess long tenure with their organizations. The GenXers were described as technologically savvy people who learn quickly and embrace diversity. They prefer informality and continuously seek a work-life balance. The GenY/Millennials, similar to the GenXers, however, tend to be more proficient with technology and require more supervision. Also, their need for work-life balance is not as powerful as the GenXers (SHRM, 2004 as cited in Gergen, Green & Ceballos, 2014). These descriptors provide insight to the values, goals, and work ethic of each generation (Craig & Bennett, 1997).

Gergen, Green, and Ceballos (2014) conducted a study to understand how each generation defines outstanding leadership. The study consisted of 977 working adults of which 435 were male and 542 female. The generational makeup was close to one-third for each group. The survey instrument consisted of 112 questions. Participants were instructed to rate behaviors according to their contribution or inhibition toward outstanding leadership. Twenty-one dimensions were used to create six second-order dimensions, five classified as contributing and one as an inhibiting. The contributing leadership dimensions include: (a) charismatic/value-based, (b) team oriented, (c) participative, (d) humane, and (e) autonomous. The inhibiting dimension is self-protective leadership.

A Pearson correlation analysis between participant age and each of the six dimensions found significant correlations existed between participative and self-protective leadership and age. Multivariate analysis determined that four of the six leadership dimensions were found to be significant: charismatic/value based leadership,

team oriented leadership, participative leadership, and self-protective leadership (Gergen, Green & Ceballos, 2014). Charismatic/value based leaders are visionaries who motivate and inspire their followers to perform. They are excellent role models who demonstrate integrity. Significant results of the study found that females, especially Baby Boomer women valued charismatic/value based leadership more than males (Gergen, Green & Ceballos, 2014). Team oriented leaders leverage their team members to work together to achieve goals. They are diplomatic individuals, who are capable administrators of collaboration. Significant results in the category indicate that Baby Boomer females rate team orientations higher than Baby Boomer males (Gergen, Green & Ceballos, 2014). Participative leaders engage their constituents in the decision-making process and revealed significant results for both gender and generation. Females value participative leadership more than males in all three generations. Additionally, GenYers/Millennials rated participatory leadership as more important than GenXers or Baby Boomers (Gergen, Green & Ceballos, 2014). The inhibiting dimension of self-protection is demonstrated to ensure safety and security and is promoted through status and saving face. The results were significant for both gender and generation. Females more than males found self-protection leadership as a barrier to outstanding leadership. Additionally, GenYers/Millennials were found to be more tolerant of self-protection leadership than Baby Boomers (Gergen, Green & Ceballos, 2014).

The research suggests that female leaders prefer relationship-oriented behaviors more than their male counterpart. Female leaders appreciate participative leadership and demonstrate it by valuing team building and motivating others. The generational

findings provide insight for the study while offering opportunities to hypothesize and conduct future studies (Gergen, Green & Ceballos, 2014).

## **Success and Development**

Women with similar career paths and work experience as men report near equity concerning title and position, however, they are still being paid less. Studies indicate that despite being paid less than their counterparts, women still consider themselves successful (Dann, 1995; Dyke & Murphy, 2006). Males and females measure success using different scales of measurement. Men predominantly use objective scales assessing salary and position, where women use subjective scales, assessing accomplishment, work-life balance, and relationships (Dyke & Murphy, 2006).

Despite the appearance of equity in organizations, many disparities remain. Particularly in the area of organizational development. Current leadership programs remain grounded in the masculine image of leadership and do not address the unique challenges that women face (Sandler, 2014). Organizations should consider alternative leadership development solutions uniquely designed for women.

**Defining success.** Success is a state of measurement that each judge about their accomplishment, as compared to their personal criteria (Ng & Feldman, 2014, Park, 2010). Women value relationships, therefore, it is no surprise that they associate success from an intrinsic perspective. Women regard achievement of personal goals as the number one determinant of success, followed by recognition and enjoyment of the work they perform (Northcutt, 1991). For women, self-fulfillment is a common theme (Hardesty & Jacobs, 1986).

A survey conducted by *Working Women* magazine asked both men and women to choose the top three elements that would define success for them. Seventy-nine percent of the sample chose family life and relationship. The differences between genders were apparent when it came to the evaluation of the extrinsic and intrinsic factors. Men perceived wealth as a factor for success 32% of the time compared to women with 21%. Additionally, women valued time with family as a priority 70% of the time compared to men at 58% (Kagan, 1993 as cited in Dyke, 2006).

A more comprehensive study involving semi-structured, face to face interviews with 20 men and 20 women provide additional insight to the themes associated with each gender's perception of success. For women, the relationship appears to be a common theme, for men, the material reward is the consistent determinant. Women also described life balance as a key contributor to success. The ability to juggle demands of both family and career and not having to sacrifice one for the other. Women reported the dimension 50% of the time, compared to men at a mere 5%. Conversely, material success was determined to be a significant contributor for men, 45% of the male participants identified with the dimension, compared to only 15% for women. Similar to the findings of the *Working Women* study, men, and women both value relationship as a significant contributor to success; 45% and 30% respectively (Dyke & Murphy, 2006).

These findings appear to align with the traditional gender role stereotypes that women and men assume. Women, as the usual caregiver, naturally embrace a more communal leadership style identifying the elements of relationship and work-life balance as success factors. Men, as the head of household, take on the agentic leadership

style, identifying monetary and material reward as success factors (Dann, 1995; Dyke & Murphy, 2006).

**Development designed for women.** Various training and development opportunities are available for women leaders. The most common are technical training, coaching and critical project assignments. Some of the least common approaches include leadership development workshops, sponsors, mentors and career paths. According to Burke and McKeen (1994) the most common and readily used forms of development tend to be the least useful to the participant. While the least common activities are deemed most effective, as they include: unique leadership programs, mentoring and sponsorship.

Organizations have attempted to improve the representation of women in leadership positions by embracing diversity and inclusion initiatives, women's networks and specialized women's leadership development programs. For these programs to be effective, they should increase awareness of gender bias in the workplace and the differences between male and female leadership styles (Sandler, 2014). Differences in leadership styles may be due to the differences in brain functionality between genders. Advances in neuroscience have confirmed that while gender does not affect intelligence, there are differences in how the brain performs. Gray matter in a man's brain is 6.5 times higher than a woman's, explaining behavior consistent with information processing. A woman's brain has ten times more white matter than a man's, explaining behavior consistent with connection making (Science Daily, 2005). These findings confirm the outcomes from personality assessments that typically report

women scoring higher than men in relationships and other emotional intelligence competencies (Stein & Book, 2011).

Leadership development programs specifically designed for women emphasize the transformational leadership styles that are more naturally demonstrated by women than men. More importantly, these programs provide a safe environment for women to have a discourse about the challenges they face regarding the double-bind problem of trying to simultaneously satisfy both the female gender role and the male stereotype of leadership (Debebe, Anderson, Bilimoria & Vinnicombe, 2016). Research suggests mixed-gender learning programs add value when attempting to integrate women into an organization. However, they should be complementary to a women only program. Mixed-gender programs emit gender pressures that tend to inhibit a safe environment for women, precluding them from openly sharing their experiences (Debebe, 2011; Ely, Ibarra, & Kolb, 2011). Leadership development programs are intended to promote transformational change by challenging how individuals think and behave. Women only development programs serve this purpose and consistently receive positive evaluations and outcomes (Tanton, 1992).

## **Chapter Summary**

Findings from the literature indicate that leadership as a profession is continuously changing and that both male and females leaders confront the reality of having to keep pace. A leader's most significant responsibility is the ability to guide their followers through the fear of change. By clearly communicating the impacts of change, the workforce can accept, engage and move forward (Heifetz & Laurie, 2001).

Approaches to leadership are also changing, traditional methods consistent with the transactional style of leadership are making way for more transformational and personal approaches (Mascia, 2015; Offermann & Gowing, 1990). Most recently is the movement toward a more authentic approach that leverages both self-awareness and self-regulating processes (Walumbwa et al., 2008). Perhaps the most significant advancement is the realization that more than one approach may be needed as reflected in the Full Range Leadership Model incorporating authentic, transformational, transactional, and strategically distributed leadership approaches (Full-range Leadership Report, 2015).

While male and female leaders alike are confronted with the challenges of managing change, women leaders face additional burdens relating to the invisible barriers commonly known as the glass ceiling (Carli & Eagly, 2001; Debashish & Lenka, 2016; Ridgeway, 2001). These barriers and biases relate primarily to gender roles and the male stereotype of leadership (Oakley, 2000). Women in their effort to become successful leaders face a unique struggle of maintaining their personal identity and leading with authenticity. Frequently women feel pressured to conform to expectations that run counter to their natural communal tendencies and society imposed gender expectation (Reid, 2015). Navigating the terrain over time negatively affects women's self-confidence resulting in decreased work satisfaction and decreased motivation to pursue a progressive career in leadership (Coffman & Neunfeldt, 2014; Eagly, 2005).

Men and women also measure success differently. Women tend to define success through intrinsic measures, they value relationships and measure their success by performing meaningful work and attaining goals. The most significant of these



measures is the ability to achieve work-life balance juggling the demands of career, family and external relationship. In contrast, men tend to measure success through extrinsic measures, focusing primarily on title and position within the organization, promotion and salary level (Dyke & Murphy, 2006; Hardesty & Jacobs, 1986; Northcutt, 1991).

Finally, the literature suggests that an alternative approach to leadership development for women is in order. Women-only leadership development programs provide a complement to traditional coed leadership development programs. The approach provides a safe environment for women leaders to share and discuss the unique challenges they face managing both career and home life. These programs also provide a support network that can be leveraged beyond the initial workshops (Debebe, 2011; Ely et al., 2011).

## **Chapter Three: Research Design and Methodology**

### **Introduction**

Chapter three describes the research approach used to conduct a study investigating female leaders in the workplace. A review of the research questions is presented, followed by individual sections addressing the: (a) Nature of the Study, (b) Methodology, (c) Research Design, (d) Human Subject Consideration, (e) Data Collection, (f) Interview Techniques, (g) Interview Protocol, (h) Statement of Personal Bias, and (i) Data Analysis. The Nature of the Study section describes the type of study or approach employed, the essential characteristics, and the perceived strengths and weaknesses. The Methodology section identifies the method of inquiry and why it was determined to be most appropriate for the study. The Research Design section focuses on the processes for subject selection. Human subject consideration outlines the processes taken to protect participants of the study. The data collection provides details regarding the scheduling of interviews and recording procedures, while interview techniques describe how the interviews were conducted and the processes the researcher used to ensure a successful interview. The Interview Protocol section presents the interview questions and their relationship to the research questions. Also included are the validity and reliability processes. A Statement of Personal Bias highlights the importance of researcher awareness and the process of epoche. Finally, the Data Analysis section outlines the coding process used to describe, classify, and interpret the information obtained from the data collection process.

## **Re-Statement of Research Questions**

The purpose of the study was to explore how leading with authenticity contributes to women leaders' success and to identify the challenges and strategies that successful women leaders face leading authentically. The study also sought to determine how women leaders who lead with authenticity define success, and if they would recommend being authentic to aspiring women. The following research questions guided the study:

**RQ1:** How does leading with authenticity contribute to women leaders' success?

**RQ2:** What barriers and challenges do successful women leaders face in leading with authenticity?

**RQ3:** What strategies do successful women leaders employ to lead authentically?

**RQ4:** How do women leaders who lead with authenticity define success for themselves?

**RQ5:** Would successful women leaders recommend being authentic to aspiring women leaders?

## **Nature of the Study**

According to Creswell (2014), an intersection of three components influences the overarching framework for a research approach. The components include: (a) the philosophical worldview that the researcher contributes to the study, (b) the method of inquiry that will be employed and (c) the research methods or tactics used to collect data, perform analysis and interpret results. The constructivist worldview applies to the study, as it assumes that individuals strive to find meaning from their

lived experiences, in an attempt to make sense of the world around them. The study served to derive the various interpretations of meaning behind the leadership experiences of the subjects (Creswell, 2013, 2014; Lincoln & Guba, 1985).

The intent of the study was to examine the perceptions and experiences of female leaders in the workplace. As such, a descriptive qualitative approach was determined to be most fitting, since it is the best option to acquire the most vivid and meaningful descriptions of the subject's experiences. Recognizing that all forms of inquiry about a particular event or phenomenon require description, it is important to acknowledge that the reports obtained through individual interpretation are influenced by the perceptions, experiences, and sensitivities of the individual describing the event (Crotty, 1998; Giorgi, 1992). Qualitative research seeks to determine through various interpretative methods an understanding of the meaning that people attribute to the subject matter. It is through the subject's unique experiences and interpreted meaning that the phenomenon is understood. The process involves both inductive and deductive reasoning to ascertain patterns, themes, and trends of the phenomenon studied (Creswell, 2013, 2014; Crotty, 1998; Denzin & Lincoln, 2000).

The strengths attributed to the qualitative approach, as compared to the quantitative approach, is the ability to acquire highly contextualized meaning and the recognition that the complexity of social phenomenon cannot be articulated sufficiently through testing and experimentation. The trade-off is the inability to apply measurement and control to a study, therefore, rendering the study non-repeatable and non-generalizable (Creswell, 2014). The descriptive qualitative approach was

used to explore the research questions and elicit responses that represent the lived experiences of the subjects (Moustakas, 1994; van Manen, 1990).

## **Methodology**

The method applied to any study refers to the philosophical position regarding life, knowledge, and human nature (van Manen, 1990). Specific methods of inquiry suit each methodology or philosophical orientation. Consistent with the philosophical worldview of the constructivist, the strategy of research known as phenomenology was deemed appropriate for the study (Creswell, 2014; Denzin & Lincoln, 2011).

**Structured process of phenomenology.** Phenomenological research attempts to describe the lived experiences of the participants, to ascertain the “essence” or common theme of everyone who has encountered the same phenomenon (Creswell 2013; Moustakas, 1994; van Manen, 1990). The collective description of the experience describes “what” the participants experienced and also “how” they experienced it, instead of the “reasons for” and “analysis of” the experience itself (Moustakas, 1994).

To allow the experiences of the subjects to emerge freely and naturally, the phenomenological researcher engaged in the practice of reserving judgment (Creswell, 2013), while also reinforcing flexibility to encourage discovery through the practice of reflection. This type of methodology encourages observation, allowing the participant to ponder, reflect, and discover the meaning behind each of the questions asked of them (van Manen, 1990). According to Descartes (1977), the discovery of knowledge through the human experience is derived from the knowing of self and the inner reflective process.

**Appropriateness of phenomenology methodology.** The method of inquiry was uniquely suited for the study since the objective was to ascertain both the personal and shared experiences of the subjects, as it pertained to the phenomenon of leadership. The personal experiences are intended to incite reaction and emotion to the phenomenon through consciousness and the intentional realization of the connection between the subject and the world (van Manen, 1990).

**Strengths and weaknesses.** The strengths of this particular methodology is a deeper understanding of the phenomenon and the genuineness, originality, and truth that emerges. Subjectivity is a legitimate concern for this type of research, especially when attempting to establish validity and reliability. Additionally, researcher bias and the interpretation of the data may also be of concern (Creswell, 2013).

## **Research Design**

**The unit of analysis for the study was a woman leader.** The population consisted of all active members of the National Association of Professional Women (NAPW). The NAPW is a membership-based organization providing women with resources to achieve professional success. The sample included the members of the NAPW South Orange County Chapter who had at least 10 or more years of working experience and had earned, at a minimum, a Bachelor's Degree level of education. A formal management or leadership role was not required.

**Sample size.** Polkinghorne (1989) suggests that phenomenological studies range between five and 25 subjects, while recommendations from three to 10 have also been proposed (Dukes, 1984). Conceivably, Strauss and Corbin (1998) offer the most comprehensive method for determining the sample size for a qualitative study, by using

the criterion of saturation. Applying this approach requires that the investigation continue until no new information emerges. In the study, we solicited 15 subjects, as this provided sufficient information to adequately define both the textural and structural components necessary to prepare an essential, invariant structure describing the “essence” of the phenomenon of women and leadership (Creswell, 2013).

**Purposive sampling.** The sampling method used for the study is purposive sampling, indicating that the sampling has been intentionally selected to serve the purpose of the study. The study explores women in leadership. Therefore, it is fitting that the sample intentionally target women leaders who are members of a professional leadership association. In this situation, the subjects are sure to have experienced the phenomenon to be studied and are capable of describing the most relevant and critical aspects of their experience (Creswell, 1998).

**Participant selection.** Selection of participants was accomplished by (a) defining the sampling frame to create a master list, (b) applying the inclusion/exclusion criteria, and (c) achieving maximum variation.

***Sampling frame to create the master list.*** At the time of the study, there were 1016 active members of the NAPW, South Orange County Chapter. The president of the chapter had access to the master list of members, along with their contact information. The information was not available to individuals outside NAPW. The chapter president reviewed the Recruitment Letter (see Appendix B), outlining a description of the study’s purpose and why the members were asked to participate. The letter described the research procedures and the time commitment required to perform the initial face to face semi-structured interview and the follow-up confirmatory interview.

Once approved, the president sent the recruitment letter via email to each of the chapter members.

***Inclusion.*** The inclusion criteria for participation in the study required that each participant:

- Was an active member of the NAPW, South Orange County Chapter
- Had 10 or more years of working experience
- A level of education conferred above a Bachelor's Degree.

The criteria were used to increase the likelihood of providing a selection of subjects that had relevant experience of the phenomenon under study (Englander, 2012).

***Exclusion.*** Individuals of male gender were excluded from the study entirely.

***Maximum variation.*** The purposive sampling method was used to achieve maximum variation, so that each participant's experience, while similar, provided a degree of exclusivity and specificity that uniquely contributed to the overall description and essence of the phenomenon (Lincoln & Guba, 1985). Maximum variation was achieved by selecting members of organizations that represented diverse industries, age groups, and cultures. Representation from each of the generational groups was also included: Baby Boomers, Generation X, and Generation Y/Millennials.

## **Human Subject Consideration**

The research was conducted in accordance with Title 45, Part 46 of the U.S. Code of Federal Regulations, Pepperdine's IRB, and the Belmont Report. These requirements are designed to protect human subject participant's rights and welfare and to ensure that no risk would be imposed upon them during the research (Creswell, 2013; Denzin & Lincoln, 2000; Trochim, 2001). Pepperdine's review board is



responsible for determining that all studies involving human subjects comply with federal, institution, and ethical guidelines.

Data collection commenced upon approval of the exempt application from Pepperdine's Institutional Review Board (IRB) (see Appendix A). The Recruitment Letter (see Appendix B) was sent to the President of the NAPW, South Orange County Chapter via email and forwarded to the chapter members. The recruitment letter described the objective of the research study and outlined the processes of the semi-structured and follow-up confirmatory interviews. Also included were a statement of voluntary participation, the intent to protect participant confidentiality, the use of pseudonyms and the destruction of audio recording once transcribed. Confidentiality and protection were maintained throughout the data collection process. Participant names were not included. Instead, a pseudonym was used to represent each of the participants. The pseudonym was created using an abbreviation for the respective generational grouping and a numeric number, such as "BB-001" for the first participant belonging to the Baby Boomer generation. Special attention was made to ensure that subject names were not recorded and that recordings were destroyed once the transcription process was completed and confirmed. The transcription files were stored on an external password protected hard drive and also backed up on a cloud server that was also password protected. All notes and paper files were stored in a locked file cabinet.

The subjects were provided a Consent Agreement (see Appendix C) once selected to participate. The consent agreement clearly stated that participation was voluntary and that they retained the right to terminate participation at any time. The

highest ethical standards were applied to data collection, analysis, and presentation. The investigator conducted the project with the utmost integrity ensuring that all of the processes identified in the recruitment letter and consent agreement were adhered to and that the subjects were accurately and honestly represented as confirmed in the follow-up interview.

### **Data Collection**

Members replied to the recruitment letter email sent by the NAPW, South Orange County Chapter President if they were interested in participating in the study and if they met the outlined criteria. A reply indicated consent, confirming the member's willingness to engage in face to face semi-structured interview as well as a confirmatory follow-up interview and the estimated time commitment involved. The reply email provided direct access to the willing subjects. The researcher reviewed the information included in the reply, to confirm that the criteria for inclusion had been met.

The process of scheduling interviews continued until the 15 members had been selected. A two-week time frame was allocated to conduct the face to face interviews. The researcher identified specific timeslots and sent the subjects an email requesting them to select an appointment most convenient for them. Additionally, the subjects were asked to identify if they had a preference for a location. The meetings took place at various locations across Orange County. The locations were determined by the subject and were based on respect for subject confidentiality, geographic proximity, and convenience to the subject. A preference for a neutral environment, free of noise and distraction was communicated. Once the appointment had been set, and at least two

days before the interview, the interview questions were forwarded to the subject for review.

The subjects were made aware of the interview processes, particularly the intent to record the proceeding. Two audio recording devices were available during the interview. The primary device included a digital voice recorder; a cellular phone served as a backup. Transcription of the interview took place within two days of the completion of the interview, increasing the accuracy and comprehensiveness of the data collection.

### **Interview Techniques**

The type of interview selected for the study was face to face, semi-structured interview consisting of open-ended questions, from which the researcher could observe the subjects, to better interpret meaning. The questions were used to guide the interview discussion. Taping the interview allowed the conversation to flow without the worry and distraction of taking notes. According to van Manen (1990), it is often easier to speak about an experience than it is to write about it, since more time is spent reflecting on the event, instead of only sharing how the event was experienced. Therefore, the questions and probes directed the interviewee to describe what the experience was like and how it made them feel. It was also the responsibility of the researcher to create an environment where the interviewee was comfortable and willing to share honestly and comprehensively (Moustakas, 1994).

The semi-structured interview provided enough structure to ensure that the questions needed for the study were presented and addressed. It also provided the examination of the topic discussed. The downside of this type of interview was the

amount of data obtained, as it required an extensive amount of time and effort to transcribe, code, and analyze (Creswell, 2013).

There are three interview types distinguished by their structure and degree of control or influence. During a structured interview, the questions are predetermined and asked in a specific order to each interviewee. The researcher maintains control of the conversation and only offers scripted responses. This type of interview mimics a survey and is used to generalize data to a large population. Conversely, there is the unstructured interview. In this situation, the researcher may have a plan of inquiry in mind, but, maintains minimal control to obtain the most information possible. Follow up questions may lead the discussion into many different directions, extending the time that it takes to perform this type of interview. Use these methods when a large amount of data is required and when time is not a factor (Harrell & Bradley, 2009). The semi-structured interview is a mixture between the two. A series of questions are used to guide the discussion. However, it is not intended to be a scripted event. The order of the questioning may be changed to accommodate the interviewee or the direction of the conversation. The interview becomes somewhat conversational, allowing deeper probing into the question or topic, to get more clarification and meaning (Harrell & Bradley, 2009; Moustakas, 1994).

According to Trochim (2001), there are four areas of an interview to consider when preparing for a study: (a) opening remarks, (b) asking the questions, (c) probing, and (d) concluding the interview. Opening remarks focused on gaining the confidence of the interviewee; this was accomplished by displaying a professional image, introducing herself with confidence and providing a brief explanation of the study.

Asking the questions focused on the effectiveness of the interview, and was accomplished by trusting the instrument, and by asking all of the questions exactly as written. The interviewers refrained from changing the order of the questions and attempting to finish the sentences of the subject. Probing was used to elicit a more detailed response. Strategies for accomplishing this included being patient and remaining silent, asking for clarification and elaboration, and by repeating questions. Concluding the interview focused on thanking the participant and communicating next steps. Adequate time was provided for the participant to wind down from the questioning. Once completed, the audio files, notes, and memos were transcribed.

### **Interview Protocol**

Interviews offer a highly personal and efficient form of research. The researcher personally interacts with the subject while observing unspoken messages often communicated through nonverbal mannerisms and behavior. Additionally, the interviewer may be able to acquire additional information through follow-up questions, an advantage not available through questionnaires and surveys (Trochim, 2001). Dexter (1970), proposes that the interview is a conversation with intention and purpose. The meeting allows the subject to move through time, by reflecting upon the past, experiencing the present and anticipating the future (Guba & Lincoln, 1981).

**Interview questions.** Twelve questions made up the foundation of face to face, semi-structured interview. These questions were intended to guide the interview and were specifically aligned to each of the research questions and were informed by the literature review. Each question was designed to elicit a narrative response from the subject. Often, the questions served as a mere prompt, requiring the interviewer to

remain patient until the subject could gather their thoughts and communicate their story (van Manen, 1990). The following interview questions were established based on personal knowledge and information gathered from the literature review:

1. As a woman, professionally, how important do you see the role of authenticity in your leadership practice?
2. How about personally?
3. If these perceived importances are different, how do you reconcile the difference?
4. How difficult is it for you to be authentic as a leader?
5. Has leading with authenticity ever become an obstacle to your success as a leader?
6. Have you ever regretted being authentic? What were the circumstances?
7. How do you maintain your authenticity as a leader?
8. If you ever have a setback from being authentic, how do you recover?
9. At the end of the day, how do you define success for yourself?
10. What would constitute failure for you?
11. Reflecting on your leadership journey, what would you do differently with regard to being authentic?
12. How important is it for aspiring women leaders to act authentically?

**Relationship between research and interview questions.** The purpose of the study informed the study's research questions. The research questions were then used to map the direction and topics of the literature review. Included in the literature review were the following knowledge areas: (a) the phenomenon of leadership, (b) the

emergence of authentic leadership, (c) the implications of gender and leadership, (d) the challenges and leadership styles of women, and (e) leadership development as it relates to women. The literature review was then used to inform the study as it attempted to identify the challenges that women in leadership face, the strategies women employ to lead authentically, how women leaders define success and recommendations that would be helpful to aspiring female leaders.

**Reliability and validity of the study.** The perspective of Lincoln and Guba (1985) was applied to ensure the validity of the data gathering instrument. This point of view adheres to a more naturalistic approach, referring to aspects of validation as credible, transferable, dependable and confirmable. Peer reviews were used to establish credibility. The peer reviewer provided an external assessment of the instrument design and asked clarifying questions relating to bias, meaning, and interpretation. Transferability was achieved by asking the subjects detailed and specific open-ended questions to collect exhausted descriptions of the data and context. The responses provided rich, thick descriptions so that the “essence” of the phenomenon could come through. Ensuring the stability of the instrument and its consistent use provided for dependability, while confirmability resulted through the documentation and application of the procedures for checking and rechecking the data throughout the study (Guba & Lincoln, 1981).

Interview questions tested for reliability by performing a pilot before the study. The pilot sought to identify questions suspect to the inconsistency of rater responses. Questions on the instrument with low inter-rater reliability were reviewed, rewritten and retested (Trochim, 2001). Iterations of questions were retained between pilots so the

improvements could be mapped. Concerning congruence of reliability and validity in qualitative research, Lincoln and Guba (1985) states that: "Since there can be no validity without reliability, a demonstration of the former [validity] is sufficient to establish the latter [reliability;]" (p. 316). Additionally, with regards to the researcher's ability and skill, in any qualitative research, reliability is a consequence of the validity of a study (Patton, 2001). Given the research design, data gathering procedures and pilot, and the elements of validity as described below the study proved adequate for demonstrating reliable outcomes.

**Prima facie validity.** Prima facie validity refers to the face value of the questions contained in the instrument used in the study. The naturalistic inquiry approach defined by Lincoln & Guba (1985) and the lived experience approach outlined by van Manen (1990) guided the construction of the interview questions. The alignment of these interview questions to the literature review and the study's research questions provided Prima facie validity see Table 1.

Table 1

*Research and Interview Questions*

Research Questions	Corresponding Interview Questions
RQ1: How does leading with authenticity contribute to women leaders' career success?	IQ 1: As a woman, professionally, how important do you see the role of authenticity in your leadership practice?  IQ 2: How about personally?
RQ 2: What barriers and challenges do successful women leaders face in leading with authenticity?	IQ 3: If these perceived importances are different, how do you reconcile the difference?

(continued)



Research Questions	Corresponding Interview Questions
	<p>IQ 4: How difficult is it for you to be authentic as a leader?</p> <p>IQ 5: Has leading with authenticity ever become an obstacle to your success as a leader?</p> <p>IQ 6: Have you ever regretted being authentic? What were the circumstances?</p>
RQ 3: What strategies do successful women leaders employ to lead authentically?	<p>IQ 7: How do you maintain your authenticity as a leader?</p> <p>IQ 8: If you ever have a setback from being authentic, how do you recover?</p>
RQ 4: How do women leaders who lead with authenticity define success for themselves?	<p>IQ 9: At the end of the day, how do you define success for yourself?</p> <p>IQ 10: What would constitute failure for you?</p>
RQ 5: Would successful women leaders recommend being authentic to aspiring women leaders?	<p>IQ 11: Reflecting on your leadership journey, what would you do differently with regard to being authentic?</p> <p>IQ 12: How important is it for aspiring women leaders to act authentically?</p>

**Peer review validity.** The study included peer review validity with Pepperdine University's Excellence and Innovation Project (EIP) members. EIP consisted of second-year doctoral students who were involved in the dissertation writing process. A selected set of students performed a review of the initial interview questions. The peer review served as an external check, making sure that the interview questions accurately aligned to the research questions and that the wording of the questions was interpreted by the subjects to return the response intended (Creswell, 2013). The reviewers provided questions and suggested edits, to increase instrument validity.

**Expert review validity.** Comments and suggestions from the peer review validity process resulted in a set of revised interview questions for review by the dissertation committee. The researcher responded to the dissertation committee by answering or clarifying any questions or comments and making any necessary adjustments. The questions once screened and approved by the dissertation committee achieved expert review validity. In a collaborative process with the dissertation committee, the original interview questions were analyzed and deemed valid. Below is the final list of interview questions.

1. As a woman, professionally, how important do you see the role of authenticity in your leadership practice?
2. How about personally?
3. If these perceived importances are different, how do you reconcile the difference?
4. How difficult is it for you to be authentic as a leader?
5. Has leading with authenticity ever become an obstacle to your success as a leader?
6. Have you ever regretted being authentic? What were the circumstances?
7. How do you maintain your authenticity as a leader?
8. If you ever have a setback from being authentic, how do you recover?
9. At the end of the day, how do you define success for yourself?
10. What would constitute failure for you?
11. Reflecting on your leadership journey, what would you do differently with regard to being authentic?

12. How important is it for aspiring women leaders to act authentically?

### **Statement of Personal Bias**

The researcher is female and has served in numerous leadership positions. Her thirty-year career involved large scale manufacturing for the United States military programs in both the shipbuilding and aerospace industries. Considering both industries are male dominated, previous work experience could introduce unintentional bias into the results. The researcher is also a member of the NAPW, South Orange County Chapter. However, she never attended any of the chapter meetings and had not had contact with any member except for the chapter president before the study. Every effort was made to minimize bias and to ensure that personal opinions and perceptions did not adversely influence the research results.

**Epoche.** Moustakas (1994) considers the practice of epoche a necessary precursor to obtaining new knowledge. The clearing of the mind from predispositions and prejudices allow the individual to experiences events with a clear and untainted consciousness. The process of letting preconceptions go is a thoughtful process that takes time and practice, but once accomplished allows the individual to become more receptive to new ideas and people's opinion based on presentation and not preconceived opinion. The researcher participated in the process of epoche (bracketing) as it pertained to her experiences of leadership and authenticity in the workplace. The strategy helped to achieve a renewed and clear perspective before engaging in the data collection process.

## Data Analysis

Creswell (2013) refers to data analysis as a series of interrelated process of data collection, analysis, and report writing. The iterative sequence of these operations supports the notion of “learning as you go,” a theme that most attribute to the inherent nature of qualitative data analysis (Dey, 1995). The sequence is best described by Creswell (2013) as a data analysis spiral, as the processes seem to move in a more circular than linear pattern. The first loop of the spiral involves the organization of the data, followed by reading and notetaking, describing and classifying and finally representing and visualizing.

**Reading, memoing.** The researcher transcribed each of interviews herself, in an attempt to personally connect with the participant, by immersing herself in the details of the discussion. Once the transcription had been read and reread for clarity and understanding a high-level analysis of the interview was assembled (Agar, 1980). It was important to make notations throughout the text as they came to mind. These notes proved helpful when attempting to break down the interview into categories and themes (Creswell, 2013).

The use of field notes proved useful during the data analysis process. Bailey (1996) identifies the four types of field notes developed by Schatzman, Strauss, and Burgess. Observational notes, labeled with the symbol “ON” were used to describe events that had taken place. Theoretical notes, labeled with the symbol “TN” were used to identify meaning to the experience. Methodological notes, labeled with the symbol “MN” were used to remind the investigator to perform a task associated with the research process itself. Finally, Analytical memos, labeled with the symbol “AM” served

as a compilation of activities or events in the form of a summary or progress report. Categorizing the note types ahead of time, provided a means to compile similar notes for review and quick action.

**Describing, classifying, interpreting (coding).** The phenomenological approach to inquiry lends itself to the art of discovery by allowing the subjects to express in their terms their experience of the phenomenon. As such, data emerges naturally only when the researcher remains open and flexible enough to intuitively identify the meaning behind the information provided (Giorgi, 1997). Following Moustakas (1994) process of phenomenological data analysis, the researcher conducted horizontalization, by sifting through the data to identify any “significant statements,” sentences, or quotes. The process provided an understanding of how the participant experienced the phenomena. Clusters of meaning were then identified by categorizing the statements into shared and related themes. The themes were then used to construct both structural and textural descriptions. The structural description identifies the context, setting, and conditions that influenced the phenomena, while the textural description captured the details of the participant’s experience. The descriptions were then coupled to create the invariant structure or “essence” of the experienced phenomena. The descriptive passage consisted of a couple of paragraphs and reflected the common influences and experiences of all participants involved in the study. Polkinghorne (1989) claims that a successful passage is determined when the reader can identify with and feel the experience of the phenomena.

***Interrater reliability and validity.*** Inter-rater reliability refers to the degree of agreement between rater interpretation and coding of the interviews involved in the

study. High inter-rater reliability provides substantial evidence that the study is scientifically valid (Kurasaki, 2000). The study achieved high inter-rater reliability with the help of a peer review committee. Two co-raters were selected from Pepperdine University's Excellence and Innovation project. Members of the project were second-year doctoral students in the process of writing descriptive qualitative dissertations and familiar with the research design of a phenomenological study. A four step process applied:

- Step One - Transcribe and coded three interviews using the outlined methodology.
- Step Two – The co-raters reviewed the interview transcripts, notes, and coding results and provided feedback. The goal was to achieve consensus on the major themes derived from the interviews and to obtain agreement on the coding approach to be used for the remaining interviews. The dissertation committee chairperson served as a final decision maker in situations where the panel could not achieve consensus.
- Step Three - The remaining 12 interview transcripts were coded using the agreed upon major themes and coding approach. The results of the coding were forwarded to the peer review committee for review and concurrence. Any feedback was examined with the intent to arrive at an agreement.
- Step Four – Had there been a difference in views in the peer review process, the dissertation committee would have intervened. Bar charts

are used to help interpret and communicate the data. The graphical displays presented the coding results from each of the interview questions as they related to the research questions.

***Representing, visualizing.*** Visual representations of the findings helped make sense of the data compiled during the study. Images included tables, graphs, or figures. A hierarchical diagram similar to an organizational chart helped to create a structured representation of the data. The images used to understand the data sometimes differed from the presentation of the findings inferred from the data (Creswell, 2013). The objective of the final research package was to communicate the story behind the study. The images helped lead the reader from the beginning of the study to the end so that the reader could follow the logic and interpret the same meaning from the study.

## **Chapter Summary**

Chapter three outlined the philosophical worldview, experiment design, and research methods that were considered to determine the research approach for the study. The descriptive qualitative study explored the perceptions of women leaders in the workplace. The intent of the study was to identify how leading with authenticity contributes to the success of women leaders, what barriers and challenges that successful women leaders face leading authentically and the strategies they employ doing so. How authentic women leaders define success and if they would recommend authenticity to aspiring leaders. The chapter described the phenomenological method of inquiry, its strengths, and weaknesses, and why it was the most appropriate

approach for the study. The research design identified the analysis unit, the population, sampling frame, and criteria for inclusion. Human subject considerations were addressed and in compliance with Pepperdine University's IRB process. The data collection procedures included the details of the recruiting strategy, while the interview protocol methods identified the use of a semi-structured interview, as a means to collect the research data. Processes to validate and deem the research instrument reliable are also clearly articulated.



## Chapter Four: Findings

### Introduction

The purpose of this descriptive phenomenological study was to examine and learn from the leadership experiences of successful women leaders across multiple generations. The study investigated the unique challenges women leaders face and the strategies they employed to lead authentically. To further understand how leadership was applied, the study sought to clarify how successful women leaders define and measure success, while also soliciting their recommendations for aspiring leaders. The following research questions were designed to serve this purpose:

1. How does leading with authenticity contribute to women leaders' career success?
2. What barriers and challenges do successful women leaders face in leading with authenticity?
3. What strategies do successful women leaders employ to lead authentically?
4. How do women leaders who lead with authenticity define success for themselves?
5. Would successful women leaders recommend being authentic to aspiring women leaders?

The five research questions were used to guide the development of 12 interview questions that were asked of the 15 participants engaged in the study. The participant's perspectives and individual experiences were sought to better understand how authenticity is demonstrated in a woman's leadership practice and in their personal life.

The study attempted to address the differences in generational viewpoints by including as many generational groups of women leaders as possible. The participant answers were interpreted to identify characteristics for each of the interview questions. These characteristics served as the basis to develop common themes. This chapter serves to present each of the questions, to define the focus for each of the themes and cite specific responses from the participants that support the interpretation and coding of the data gathered.

## **Participants**

Purposive sampling was used to identify the population for the study. According to Creswell (1998), this type of sampling is used to ensure that the subjects have experienced the phenomenon to be studied and are capable of describing the most relevant and critical aspects of their experiences. Members of the NAPW, South Orange County Chapter were selected for this study. Solicitation for participants was achieved using a recruitment letter outlining the intent of the study, the inclusion criteria, the processes for ensuring confidentiality and the handling of sensitive and personal information. The sampling pool consisted of 14 active NAPW, South Orange County Chapter members, and one former member. Four generational groups were represented in the sample including (a) Traditional/Silent Generation; (b) Baby Boomers; (c) Generation X; and the GenY/Millennial Generation (see Figure 1). The cumulative work experience from the participants included in the sample was 448 years. Years of experience in the workforce and the respective percentages from the sample are depicted in Figure 2. The current employment status percentages for the sample

are depicted in Figure 3, with the type of work and respective industry classifications depicted in Figures 4 and 5 respectively.

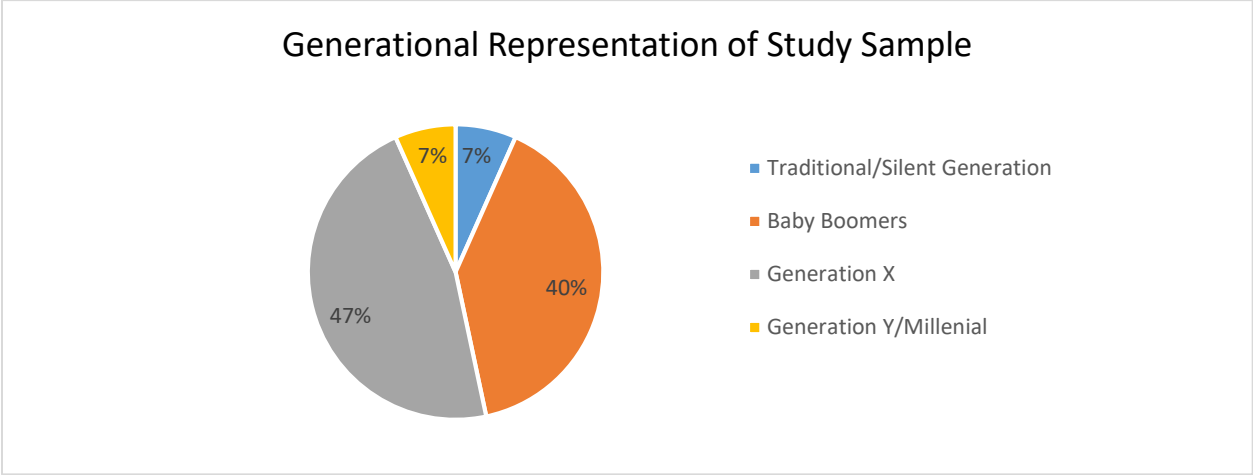


Figure 1. Generational representation of study sample.

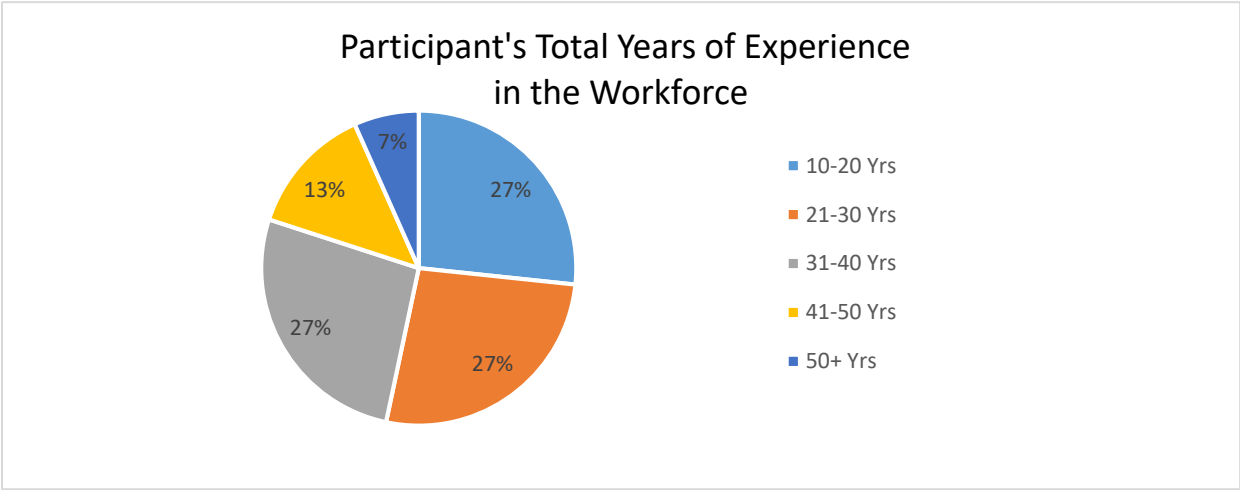


Figure 2. Participant's total years of experience in the workforce.

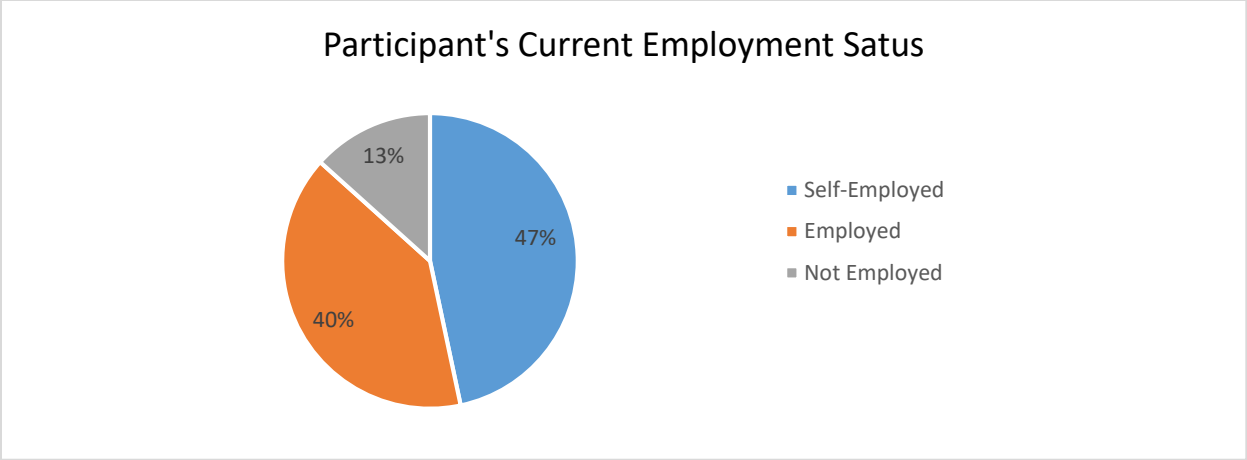


Figure 3. Participant's current employment status.

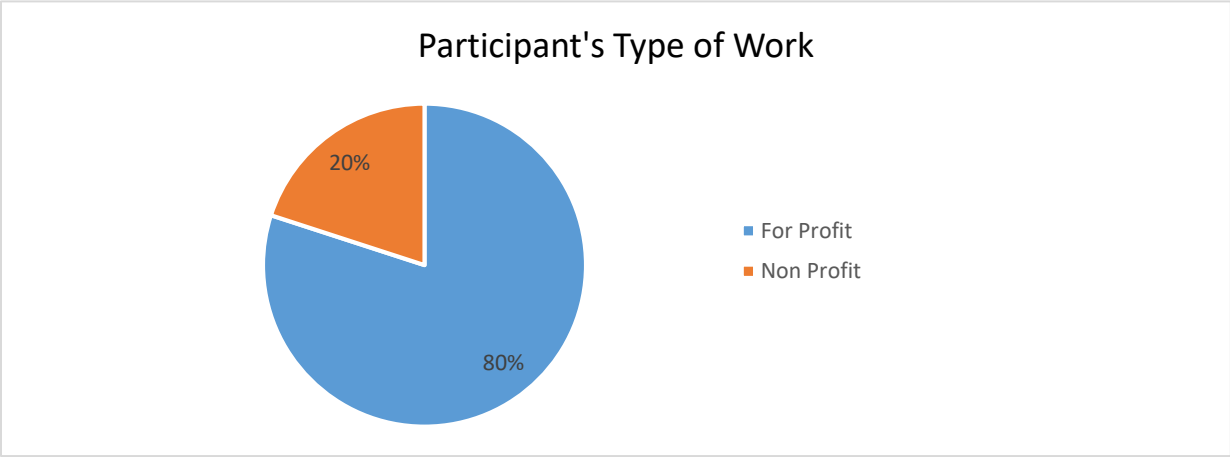


Figure 4. Participant's type of work.

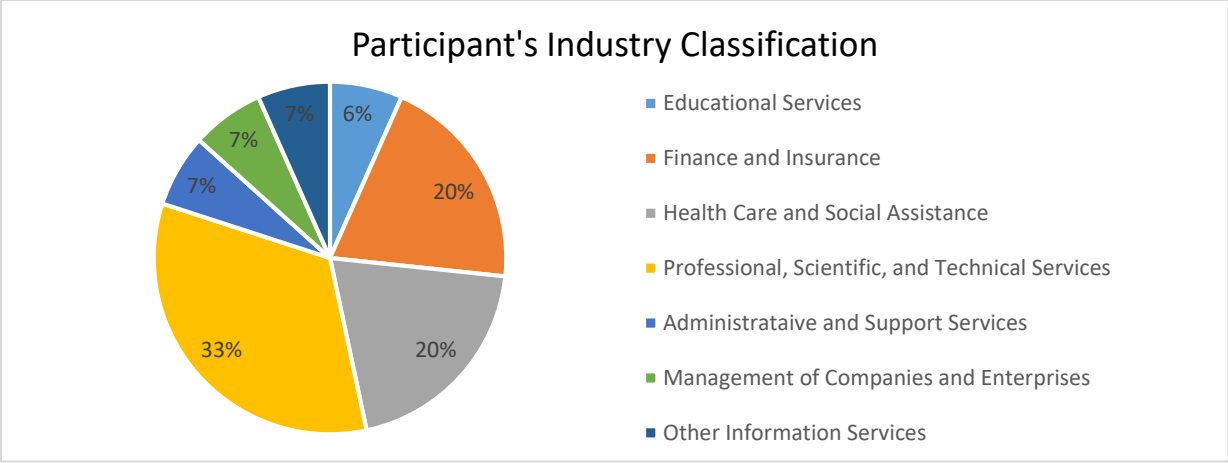


Figure 5. Participant's industry classification.

All demographic data was captured by asking the participant to complete a Demographic Worksheet (see Appendix D), this worksheet was completely voluntary and was kept confidential by applying the respective pseudonym assigned to the participant. All participants agreed to provide the demographic information. The percentage of participant's highest level of work experience are represented in Figure 6 with the percentages of participant's level of education represented in Figure 7.

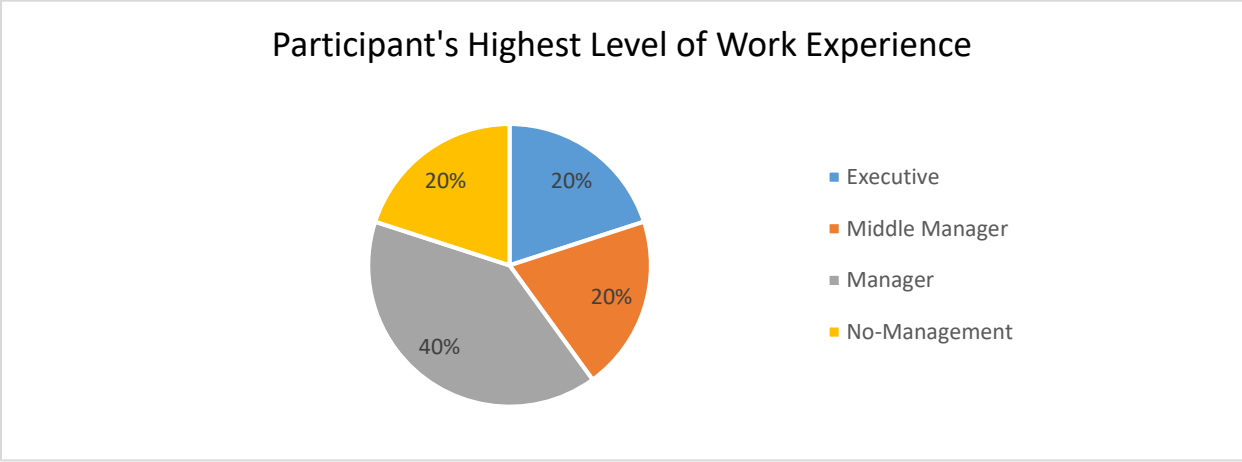


Figure 6. Participant's highest level of work experience or position.

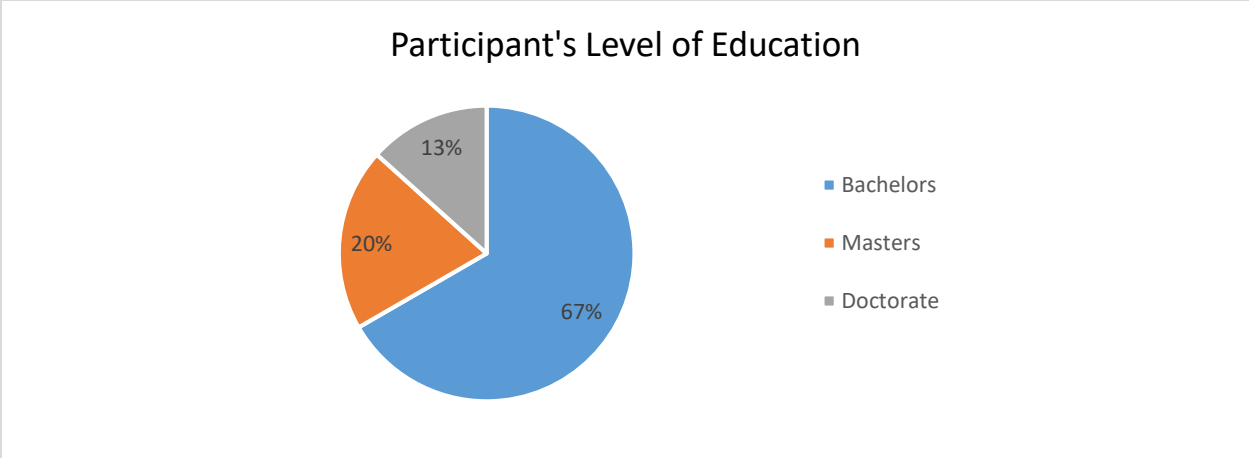


Figure 7. Participant's level of education.

Personal characteristics associated with the sample participants included ethnicity, marital status and whether or not the participants had children, these characteristics and percentages are reflected in Figures 8, 9 and 10 respectively.

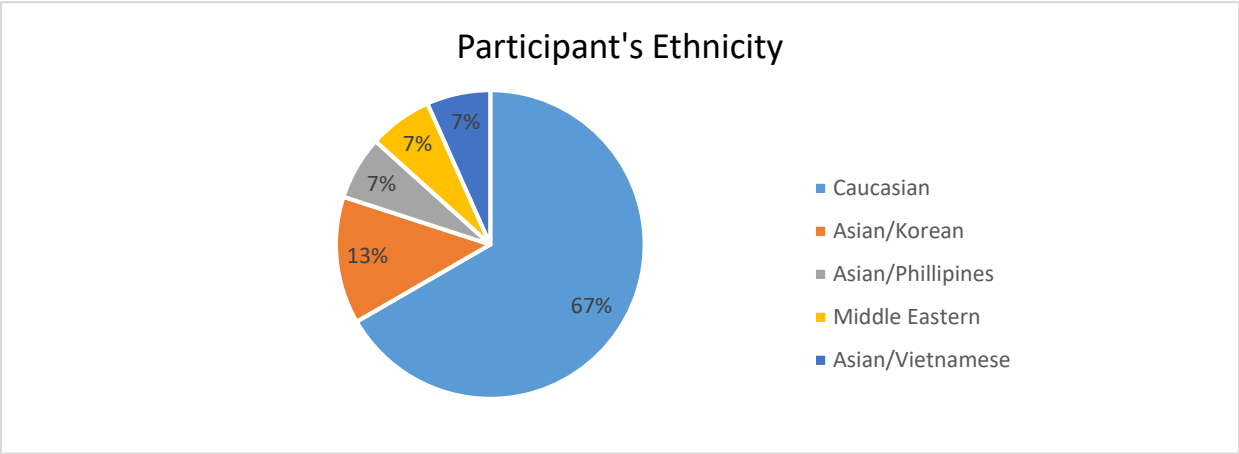


Figure 8. Participant's ethnicity.

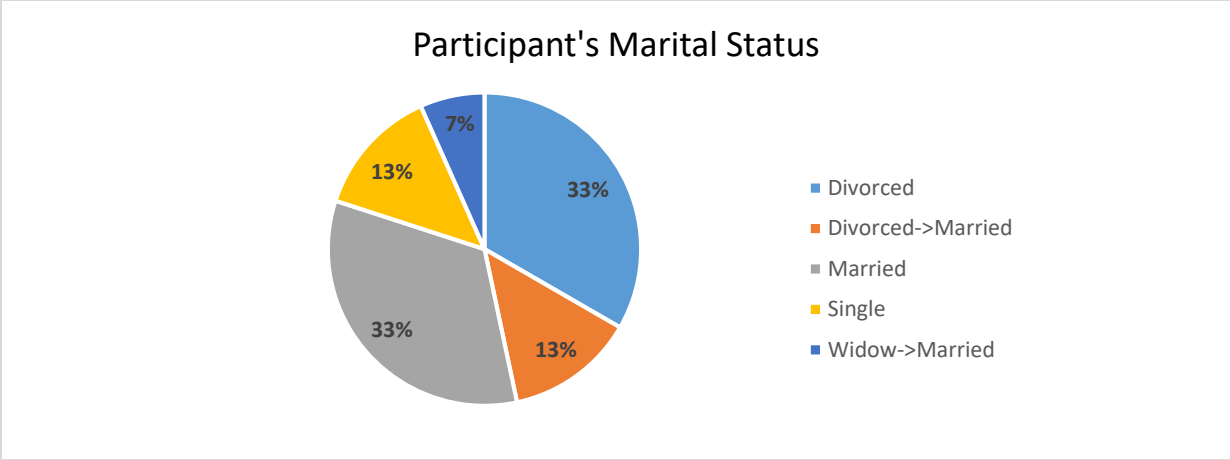


Figure 9. Participant's marital status.

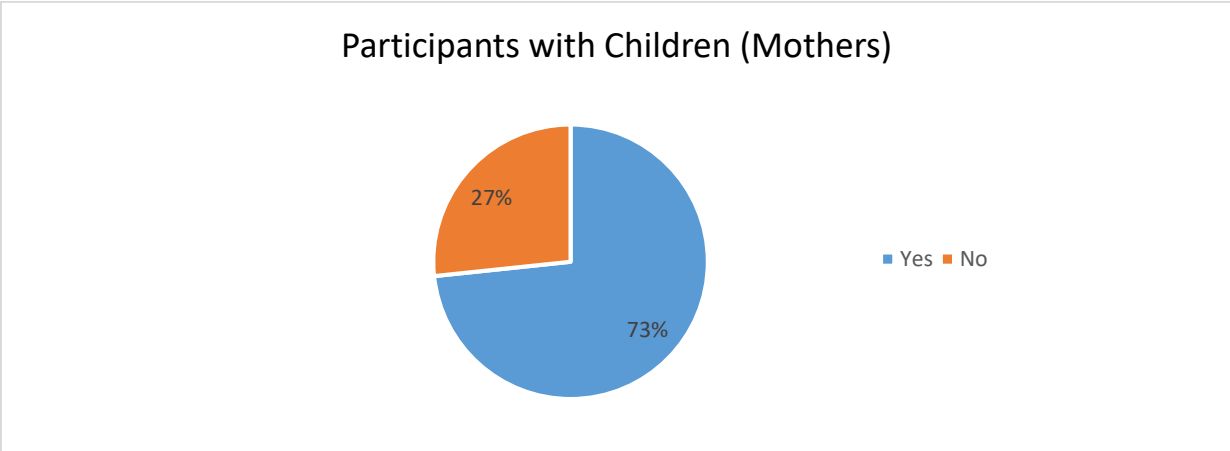


Figure 10. Participants with children.

The demographic data provides a multi-faceted lens of the characteristics, work and educational attributes of the participants involved in the study. This lens helps to provide insight into the lives and experiences of the participants and provides context for the statements and perspectives offered.

## **Data Collection**

Data collection commenced upon receipt of IRB approval on January 10, 2017, at which time the recruitment script was sent to the President of the NAPW, South Orange County Chapter. The president was asked to forward the recruitment script to the chapter members using the chapter email listing. On January 19, 2017, a reply from the president had not yet been received. At this point, the researcher proceeded to send individual messages to the members through the NAPW website, embedding the recruitment script. The first interview acceptance was received on January 21, 2017.

Due to poor response ratings, the researcher attended the monthly NAPW, South Orange County Chapter meeting on January 26, 2017. The researcher was given 10 minutes to solicit participants, review the recruitment script, inclusion criteria and answer questions. A signature sheet was distributed, eight additional people agreed to participate. The researcher proceeded to contact the individuals and schedule interviews. The original nine interviews were conducted from January 28, 2017, through February 7, 2017.

To acquire additional participants, the researcher contacted the NAPW, North Orange County Chapter President and asked to present at the February 9, 2017, monthly meeting. The researcher duplicated the previous process and acquired enough names to secure the remaining six participants. Five of the six participants were members of both the NAPW, North and South Orange County Chapters, therefore, meeting the inclusion criteria. It was discovered upon interview scheduling that one of the potential participants who had attended the February meeting, had allowed her membership with NAPW to expire in December of 2016. It was determined, that while



she no longer met the inclusion criteria of being and “Active” chapter member, her previous membership experience did meet the intent of the criteria and that her involvement in the study did not invalidate or negatively impact the research. Interviews with the remaining participants were conducted between February 10, 2017, and February 16, 2017. Table 2 identifies the participant number, the applied pseudonym, and the respective interview date. Also included is the type of transcript confirmation discussed in the Data Analysis section.

Table 2

*Participant Data Collection and Analysis*

Participant Number	Assigned Pseudonym	Interview Date	Interview Transcript Confirmed
1	TSG-001	January 28, 2017	Yes
2	GX-001	January 28, 2017	Yes
3	BB-001	January 29, 2017	Yes
4	BB-002	January 30, 2017	Yes, passive
5	BB-003	February 4, 2017	Yes w/ edits
6	BB-004	February 4, 2017	Yes
7	GX-002	February 4, 2017	Yes, passive
8	GX-003	February 6, 2017	Yes, passive
9	GYM-001	February 7, 2017	Yes, passive
10	GX-004	February 10, 2017	Yes
11	BB-005	February 11, 2017	Yes w/ edits

(continued)

Participant Number	Assigned Pseudonym	Interview Date	Interview Transcript Confirmed
12	BB-006	February 13, 2017	Yes w/ edits
13	GX-005	February 13, 2017	Yes w/ edits
14	GX-006	February 15, 2017	Yes w/ edits
15	GX-007	February 16, 2017	Yes, passive

The participant interviews were scheduled at a time and location convenient for the participant. The interview questions and informed consent document were sent via email to each participant before the interview to help them prepare and to ensure understanding of the process and their rights as a voluntary participant. An interview checklist was used to ensure that all steps of the interview process were conducted and that they were consistently applied, increasing the reliability of the interview process. The interview checklist addressed the four areas of an interview suggested by Trochim (2001), including (a) opening remarks; (b) asking the questions; (c) probing, and (d) concluding the interview (see Appendix E). All of the interviews were conducted in Orange County, CA, and audio recorded using redundant audio devices. The following 12 interview questions were asked:

- IQ1. As a woman, professionally, how important do you see the role of authenticity in your leadership practice?
- IQ2. How about personally?

- IQ3. If these perceived importances are different, how do you reconcile the difference?
- IQ4. How difficult is it for you to be authentic as a leader?
- IQ5. Has leading with authenticity ever become an obstacle to your success as a leader?
- IQ6. Have you ever regretted being authentic? What were the circumstances?
- IQ7. How do you maintain your authenticity as a leader?
- IQ8. If you ever have a setback from being authentic, how do you recover?
- IQ9. At the end of the day, how do you define success for yourself?
- IQ10. What would constitute failure for you?
- IQ11. Reflecting on your leadership journey, what would you do differently with regard to being authentic?
- IQ12. How important is it for aspiring women leaders to act authentically?

To ensure a common understanding and definition of authentic leadership, and how the term was applied the researcher provided context regarding both the theoretical definition and the practical definition of authentic leadership. This information was provided as a means of placing boundaries around the term so the participants could not perceive authenticity as a means to imply permission to be brutally honest or to communicate with free reign.

## Data Analysis

All of the participants agreed to review and confirm the interview transcript via email via an additional interview. The researcher manually transcribed each of the interview recordings between two and seven days from the date of the interview. Initially, the plan was to complete this process within two days, however, due to the condensed time frame of interview scheduling that was not possible. The study subsequently achieved 100% transcript confirmation from the participants, increasing the validity of the data collected from the interview. One-third of the participants responded via email with a transcript confirmation, one-third responded via email with an updated version of the transcript and annotated edits. The remaining one-third agreed to the confirmation of the transcript acknowledging that the lack of a response within the allotted time would be interpreted as a passive confirmation. Table 2 identifies by participant the type of transcript confirmation attained.

Upon confirmation of the interview transcripts, the audio recording files were deleted. The researcher reviewed each of the transcripts, reading and re-reading the transcripts taking notes during the first pass. The observational notes were most extensively used and served as reminders of the level of emotion and response exhibited by the participant. During the second pass, the researcher proceeded with the process of horizontalization (Moustakas, 1994), which entailed a sifting through the data to identify the most significant statements. Clusters of meaning were then identified by categorizing the statements into shared and related themes. The final coding was accomplished according to the interrater reliability and validity process.

- Step One - Transcribe and coded three interviews using the outlined methodology.
- Step Two -The co-raters reviewed the interview transcripts, notes, and coding results and provided feedback. The goal was to achieve a consensus on the major themes derived from the interviews and to obtain agreement on the coding approach to be used for the remaining interviews. The dissertation committee chairperson served as a final decision maker in situations where the panel could not achieve consensus.
- Step Three - The remaining 12 interview transcripts were coded using the agreed upon major themes and coding approach. The results of the coding were forwarded to the peer review committee for their review and concurrence. Any feedback was examined with the intent to arrive at an agreement.
- Step Four – Had there been a difference of views in the peer review process, the dissertation committee would have intervened. Bar charts were used to help interpret and communicate the data. The graphical displays presented the coding results from each of the interview questions as they related to the research questions.

Feedback from the co-raters was agreed to and included in the final themes, the changes were related to interview questions 1, 5 and 7 and were as follows:

- IQ1 Split the theme feels better, honors personal values and create additional theme labeled fosters ethical behavior
- IQ5 Delete theme It never has – not relevant

- IQ7 Delete theme support from co-worker and combine with strong women and friends

## **Data Display**

The framework for the study originated from five research questions that were informed by the literature review. The answers to the research questions were to be informed by the responses from the interview questions. The characteristics gathered from the participants for each interview question was then used to develop common themes. Bar charts were created for each of the interview questions, identifying the themes that emerged from the participant interviews. Each figure associated with the interview question represents in descending order the number of characteristics attributed to each of the themes identified for that question.

## **Research Question One**

Research question one sought to explore how leading with authenticity contributes to women leaders' career success. Two interview questions were designed to investigate the research question; they are as follows:

IQ 1: As a woman, professionally, how important do you see the role of authenticity in your leadership practice?

IQ 2: How about personally?

Themes related to the interview questions emerged from the interview transcripts during the data analysis process. These themes were then used to form the basis for answering research question one.

**Interview question one.** As a woman, professionally, how important do you see the role of authenticity in your leadership practice? Twenty-nine characteristics were identified as the reasons why authenticity is important to professional women leaders in their leadership practice. From those 29 characteristics, seven themes emerged. The seven themes are presented in alphabetical order: (a) being true to self, genuine; (b) builds trust; (c) encourages transparency; (d) feels better, honors personal values; (e) fosters ethical behavior; (f) improves relationships; and (g) increases performance. Figure 11 represents in descending order the number of characteristics attributed to each of the seven themes.

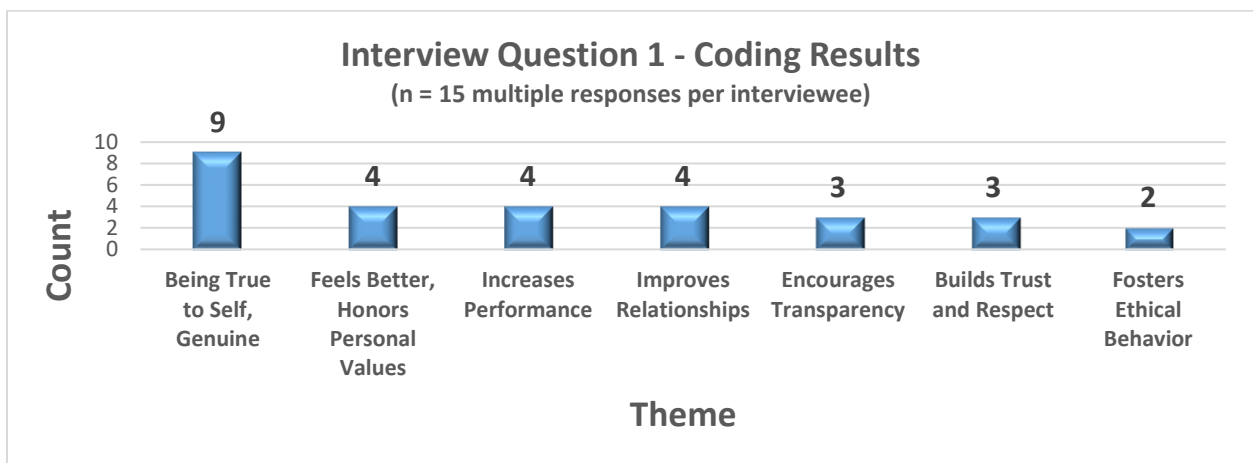


Figure 11. Why authenticity is important to professional women leaders in their leadership practice.

**Being true to self, genuine.** The most prevalent theme related to interview question one was being true to self, genuine, with nine occurrences (31%) being cited directly or indirectly by the interview participants. This question as it relates to research question one indicates that career success for a woman is highly dependent upon a woman's ability to lead others while remaining true to herself, so that she may be

perceived by others as genuine and real. For example, P9 spoke to being true to self, as it pertained to masculine vs. feminine energy in the workplace:

I always made the connection that you had to have this manly presence to be successful in the work world. I think that was an innate thing, it was never taught to me that way, but it was one of those assumptions that you make, and you don't even realize that you made it, but it affects how you act when you grow up. So, when I first started my job, I was very manly in the way that I carried myself, I always wore pantsuits, I felt like I had to be forceful in my conversations, but I realized that wasn't true to me. So, a couple of years into my job, I shifted. I started wearing dresses, and realistically, I love wearing dresses. I started being a little more feminine in my approach and how I spoke with people. Actually allowing myself, I actually consider myself a pretty sensitive person, so I allowed myself to be sensitive at work and to be "ok" with it. Being a little bit vulnerable, not only did I feel better about myself, but I think that my clients also recognized that shift and even started creating stronger relationships (P9, personal communication, February 10, 2017).

With regard to remaining true to self in the various cultures that women operate in, P7 had this to say:

Underlying all of these 12 questions is the world and operating under a certain culture, your business has a culture, your church has a culture, everything has a culture, and the whole business and world environment expect you to be not authentic. They expect you to be the know it all, never show weakness, beat your competitor, so you can't really, as iron sharpens iron, you have to put them



down, that type of thing. So, that whole culture doesn't work with the culture of the biblical mandate, which is, you lead others by serving. It's not a serving model, so at every end of this authenticity, you are trying to work within a culture that does not accept that. So, either you are going to go in and create social change, or you are not going to be able to change it because the system is just not meant for that, otherwise through time or what not. It makes it to where you create your own culture because you don't fit. So, authenticity has been huge for me, because I cannot sell my soul (P7, personal communication, February 4, 2017).

Additional comments relating to the concept of being true to self, refer to the idea of being honest and truthful. Included is P2's statement that if you are not authentic "it's like you are lying to yourself" (P2, personal communication, January 28, 2017) and P13's appeal to "be honest and be who you are" (P13, personal communication, February 13, 2017). Finally, P3, P4, P10, and P11 all made mention of the importance of authenticity and being true to themselves.

***Feels better, honors personal values.*** This theme is tied with the two themes increases performance and improves relationships as the second most prevalent theme related to interview question one, with four occurrences (14%) of it being cited directly or indirectly by the interview participants. This theme focuses on living your life in accordance with your values and how that makes you feel better. P5 speaks to authenticity and the alignment of values as a key ingredient to influence and leadership:

For me it really starts with the alignment of values and being solid in that place, because you have to be able to influence people to move along a certain path,

and if there is discord there or a lack of consonance there, it's apparent, and it impacts your leadership and your organization (P5, personal communication, February 4, 2017).

The idea that personal values can influence leadership both negatively and positively indicate that a set of criteria is associated with those values and is manifest through individual behavior. P6 speaks to the connection between authenticity and values:

I think it [authenticity] has to be a core factor for core values because if that authenticity isn't there, then you don't have a baseline, and then there are no boundaries. I think without authenticity there is so much room for chaos and that would be in the workplace and personally (P6, personal communication, February 4, 2017).

Also, included in this theme is the idea of feeling better about yourself when your actions and behavior are in alignment with your core values. These sentiments are expressed by P9 and P11, as "I feel better about me as a leader" and "I know I am happier, I can sleep at night and I am more proud of what I do. I can honestly say that I am proud of the work that I am doing" (P9, personal communication, February 7, 2017; P11 personal communication, February 11, 2107).

***Increases performance.*** This theme is tied with the two themes feels better, honors personal values and improves relationships as the second most prevalent theme related to interview question one, with four occurrences (14%) of it being cited directly or indirectly by the interview participants. This theme focuses on the positive outcomes of being authentic. The importance of authenticity in a woman's leadership practice is

reinforced by P3, who attributes her career success to her ability to be authentic, she stated “I think it [authenticity] is very important and I remember in all of my jobs, I think that is why I was always promoted. Because I was myself” (P3, personal communication, January 29, 2017). P8 recalls that “the people that I see, that are most successful in leadership are people who can show their true selves” (P8, personal communication, January 29, 2017).

P9 claims that “My results were also positively impacted. My numbers improved because people trusted me more because I was real. I wasn’t trying to be somebody else; I think it was the trust factor” (P9, personal communication, February 7, 2017). Finally, P10 and P11, stated it clearly enough when they exclaimed “I perform better when I am true to myself” and “You can excel as a leader if you are authentic” (P10, personal communication, February 10, 2017; P11, personal communication, February 10, 2017).

***Improves relationships.*** This theme is tied with the two themes feels better, honors personal values and increases performance as the second most prevalent theme related to interview question one, with four occurrences (14%) of it being cited directly or indirectly by the interview participants. This theme focuses on the positive effect that authenticity has on relationships. The importance of authenticity in a woman’s leadership practice is reinforced by the quality of the professional relationships that she can build. P9 proclaimed that as a result of her authenticity shift “I was creating real relationships with the people I was working with, and that changed the dynamic of how I work and how the people see me when I work” (P9, personal communication,

February 9, 2017). Authenticity is commonly described as being real and not fake, P10 explains that:

People know when you are not real and when you are fake. People see that, and they look up to people who are more authentic, that are more down to earth and can understand and empathize with what they go through (P10, personal communication, February 10, 2017).

It is important to recognize the integration between many of these characteristics and how they are experienced in the workplace. P12 and P14 stress the connection among authenticity, relationship, and trust “Being genuine is extremely important when you are relating to people, whether you are in a leadership role or a peer role. People need to feel comfortable with you so that they can open up and learn to trust you” and “the more authentic I am, the more willing they are to share their information (P12, personal communication, February 13, 2017; P14, personal communication, February 15, 2017).

***Encourages transparency.*** This theme is related to interview question one, with three occurrences (10%) of it being cited directly or indirectly by the interview participants. This theme focuses on allowing yourself to be vulnerable by exposing all aspects of self. The practice of transparency and embracing vulnerabilities is still emerging, and in many corporate cultures has not progressed passed the rhetoric. P7 shares her perspective on the human element and how some women entrepreneurs are creating their model for leading:

Because people in the world and corporate America, as well as even in the church, don't know what to do with that realism and that vulnerability, because it

is too human, and as leaders, you are not supposed to be human. You're supposed to be other than human, which doesn't make any sense. But, that is the expectation that is the model that we have followed all the way through. We need a whole group of people to rise and set a different model, but what we know is that change comes very slowly. So, either you work within the model and create change very slowly, or you realize that you don't have time for this and you create your own. Because our world is global now, you can do that, where it was not possible before (P7, personal communications, February 4, 2017).

Further comments regarding transparency are included in the statements by P8 who states that "Those most successful in leadership are people who can show their true selves. Being real, being transparent, and showing your weaknesses, so I think authenticity would be a critical ingredient for someone to be successful in leadership (P8, personal communication, February 6, 2017). Transparency, as it relates to a woman's role as a mother, remains to be a challenge; P9 conveys her sentiments regarding the subject in the following:

I think as women, we want to have that nurturing and motherly feel, and if we take that away, we are depriving people of useful coaching and insight not only to themselves but ourselves as well. I think that authenticity can lend so much richness to a work culture, a working relationship that sometimes we miss, because of that preconceived notion that some people have. I know there are a lot of women who are trying to fight that now or are advocating that it is ok to be a woman in the workplace (P9, personal communication, February 7, 2017).

***Builds trust and respect.*** This theme is related to interview question one, with three occurrences (10%) of it being cited directly or indirectly by the interview participants. This theme focused on improving the degree of trust and respect that leaders have with their employees. P1 believes that success as a leader requires authenticity to build trust and gain the respect of your followers:

I think to be a leader; you have to be authentic. Your staff needs to know that they can trust you, that you are truthful and everything you do is completely authentic and that you are not hiding anything or being deceitful. That you are up front and making sure, even if it is bad news that it is authentic (P1, personal communication, January 28, 2017).

The idea that respect is earned and not given is clearly articulated by P4:

I mean, I find, I lose trust or respect for someone who doesn't have authenticity. And the same thing, I have worked for people who have totally lied to my face, or I find out later what they did or didn't do, and I just lose my trust or respect for them and it is really hard to work for someone that you don't respect (P4, personal communication, January 30, 2017).

The most compelling argument supporting the importance of building trust and respect in your professional life is conveyed by P14 "I think that if they can't trust me, if I am not authentic, then there is no way they are going to do business with me" (P14, personal communication, February 15, 2017).

***Fosters ethical behavior.*** This theme is related to interview question one, with two occurrences (7%) of it being cited directly or indirectly by the interview participants.

This theme focuses on setting an example by displaying ethical conduct. P3 attributes her career success to her ability to be authentic and how that translates to integrity and ethical behavior. She asserts that “I don’t think my bosses looked down on me because I was a female, they were very supportive, I think they could see my intelligence and my work ethic, and they respected that” (P3, personal communication, January 29, 2017). Another example of how authenticity promotes ethical behavior is personified in P11’s declaration that “If they don’t want to do things in the right way, then I choose not to work with them. When you have your own business, you can do that a lot easier, because they are not 100% of your income” (P11, personal communication, February 11, 2017).

**Interview question two.** How about personally? Twenty-three characteristics were identified as the reasons why authenticity is important to professional women leaders in their personal life. From those 23 characteristics, four themes emerged. The four themes are presented in alphabetical order: (a) being true to self, genuine; (b) consistency between personal and professional life; (c) family, friends, relationships; and (d) feels better, honors personal values. Figure 12 represents in descending order the number of characteristics attributed to each of the four themes.

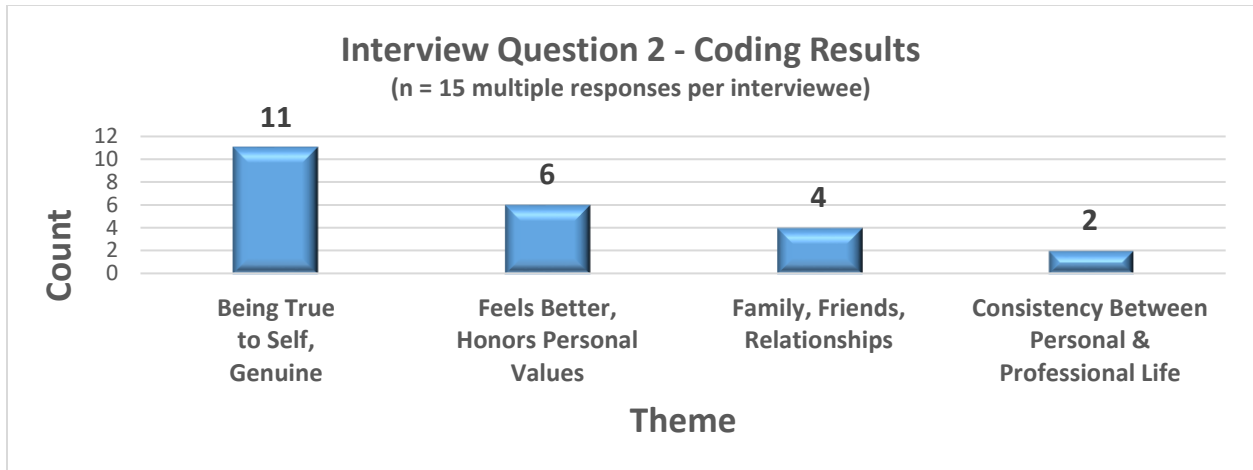


Figure 12. Why authenticity is important to professional women leaders in their personal life.

***Being true to self, genuine.*** The most prevalent theme related to interview question two was being true to self, genuine, with 11 occurrences (48%) being cited directly or indirectly by the interview participants. This question as it relates to research question one indicates that career success for a woman is highly dependent upon a woman’s ability to remain true to herself so that she may intimately know herself and can portray a sense of genuineness to others. For example, P8 spoke of being true to self as something that should be natural, but may not always be easy, she states:

I think I have always known intuitively that being authentic is healthy and natural. Being authentic comes naturally for me, however, over the years I have learned that sometimes you have to be willing to be hurt when you are putting yourself out there. You have to grow a thick skin. To be and live authentically, you have to realize that not everyone is going to approve of you (P8, personal communication, February 6, 2017).

P7 claims that authenticity is the center of her being “It [authenticity] is the core and the genesis of it all, and then it flows out of that, so my marriage, as a mother, my



friendships it's all about who I really am " (P7, personal communication, February 4, 2017). For others, such as P14, authenticity is extremely natural and is reinforced by her personal relationships and her sense of joy and self-acceptance. "Personally I don't have any issues being authentic, the people that I surround myself with already know that I laugh all the time and that I am giggly. I love to have fun, let's go try something different" (P14, personal communication, February 15, 2017). P9 speaks to the amount of energy and stress it would take not to be authentic:

If you are not authentic with who you are on a day to day basis, then I feel like you are lying to yourself. I can't even imagine living a life like that. Authenticity is of the utmost importance, not being authentic would be so stressful (P9, personal communication, February 7<sup>th</sup>, 2017).

Authenticity, as it relates to being true to self and genuineness, were mentioned by P2, P3, P5, P6, P10, P12 and P13. Their messages conveyed two common elements: know yourself and be true to yourself through your actions and deeds.

***Feels better, honors personal values.*** This theme is the second most prevalent theme related to interview question two, with six occurrences (26%) of it being cited directly or indirectly by the interview participants. This theme focuses on living your life in accordance with your values and how doing so makes you feel better. The importance of honoring personal values is communicated by P6 "I think any individual, male or female has to have core values of discipline, I have to know who I am and where, what standards I will follow" (P6, personal communication, February 4, 2017). These personal values serve as the foundation for many dimensions of life. P15 shares how being authentic enables her to role model her personal values to her children "Your

kids are watching what you do, and I want them to be authentic, so personally it is important for me to be authentic so they realize that is the way that they should be” (P15, personal communication, February 16, 2017).

Personal values can serve as a form of self-control and being authentic requires that you honor those values and that you know to be forthright and just. P10 shares her advice on honoring values and being cautious in the selection of the company that you keep; she states “I think the values that you have, you have to be authentic with them too. If you are not, you may end up with friends who are not as moral, authentic or as transparent and just fake” (P10, personal communication, February 10, 2017).

P13 speaks to authenticity and personal values and beliefs, but suggests that authenticity not be used as an excuse or means to promote personal agendas:

Authenticity is very important, but that doesn’t mean that I go around offering my opinion on everything, I mean there are lines. There are times to share your personal beliefs, but sometimes people do that too much. Like our current political situation, stuff like that. We should be focusing on the things that we know and care about together, not the things that separate us (P13, personal communication, February 13, 2017).

P11 shares the same sentiment regarding the sharing of information and the way that you communicate that information while also being authentic and true to yourself:

You can’t just blurt out whatever you think, but as you become more comfortable with your spouse and yourself, you know what you can say and how you can say it. If it is important, I am going to bring it up, in a constructive way. There were

some things that were very disappointing to me, I had surgery, and my husband who lives in WA did not come down to California for it. It hurt me, I know he thought that I was taken care of and that he was doing the right thing, but I felt very left alone. I could not communicate that to him for six months. It was a minor surgery, but I was out of work for a month. I wanted to make sure that when I told him, it came out in a constructive way and not just emotional. When I finally said it, I told him it hurt me, and I was very disappointed. I think we were able to get it out there and then move on. I ended up having another surgery as a result of the first, and he was here for three to four weeks and took really good care of me. Our marriage now is stronger as a result of it. But, had I not been authentic and told him that it had hurt me, I would still be bottling that up (P11, personal communication, February 11, 2017).

***Family, friends, relationships.*** This theme is related to interview question two, with four occurrences (17%) of it being cited directly or indirectly by the interview participants. This theme focuses on how friends and family bring fulfillment and meaning to life. Perhaps the experiences of P7 best conveys the challenges that these relationships can pose to being authentic:

Marrying outside my race, I was disowned for a long time. If you can imagine how things were back in the 60's, if a white man or a black women wanted to marry, that was just unthinkable. We laugh at it now, but that was me growing up with my generation and my family in the 80's. Even within my family culture, I said: "I cannot fulfill your expectations" of what you think is a good girl and what you want me to do. I can't do it. Their model was like the win and lose; then you

are not a part of this family. So they disowned me. I was alone for quite a while. Slowly they came around, but it is not the same. They don't see me for who I am. So, I have had to deal with that at a very personal level. This [authenticity] is very important to me, it is core to who I am, and I bring it out into everything that I do (P7, personal communication, February 4, 2017).

With respect to family, P15 conveys her realization of how authenticity plays out while raising her children "When you have children you realize that there are other people who are looking at you and that your actions matter" (P15, personal communication, February 16, 2017). Comments regarding friendships and authenticity were mentioned by P10 and P11 "I think there is a joy that you get from your ability to be authentic. If you have friends that you have to be a certain way when you are around them, what fun is that?" and "Personally, you still have to be authentic, I think your friends would know if you are not" (P10, personal communication, February 10, 2017; P11, personal communication, February 11, 2017).

***Consistency between personal and professional life.*** This theme is related to interview question two, with two occurrences (9%) of it being cited directly or indirectly by the interview participants. This theme focuses on being the same person in all aspects of your life. For example, P6 stated, "Personally I'm not going to be very convincing professionally or in the workplace if there is no consistency between who I am as an individual and who I am in the workplace" (P6, personal communications, February 4, 2017). While P1 stated "Personally, you know it is pretty hard, if you are not authentic, you cannot find objectiveness in your work" (P1, personal communications, January 28, 2017).

**Summary of research question one.** Research question one sought to explore how leading with authenticity contributes to women leaders' career success. Two interview questions investigated the importance of authenticity from both a professional and personal perspective. Nine unique themes emerged from the two interview questions they are as follows: (a) being true to self, genuine, (b) feels better, honors personal values; (c) increases performance; (d) improves relationships; (e) encourages transparency; (f) builds trust and respect; (g) fosters ethical behavior; (h) family friends and relationships; and (i) consistency between professional and personal life.

The most significant contribution represented 67% of the participant responses and was identified as being true to self, genuine. These findings are consistent with the literature suggesting that by "Being Real," leaders can articulate their competence as a leader, while also demonstrating their need for help. They possess high self-awareness and the courage to admit their shortcomings. This display of presence projects strength, builds trust, solidarity, and commitment among their followers. These leaders rely on their instincts and empathic nature to appeal to the needs of their followers (Goffee & Jones, 2000). Career success for a woman is highly dependent upon a woman's ability to lead others while remaining true to herself, so that she may be perceived by others as genuine and real. For example, P9 spoke about her experience with being true to self "Being a little bit vulnerable, not only did I feel better about myself, but I think that my clients also recognized that shift and even started creating stronger relationships" (P9, personal communication, February 10, 2017).

## Research Question Two

Research question two sought to identify the barriers and challenges that successful women leaders face while leading with authenticity. Four interview questions were designed to investigate the research question; they are as follows:

IQ 3: If these perceived importances are different, how do you reconcile the difference?

IQ 4: How difficult is it for you to be authentic as a leader?

IQ 5: Has leading with authenticity ever become an obstacle to your success as a leader?

IQ 6: Have you ever regretted being authentic? What were the circumstances?

Themes related to the interview questions emerged from the interview transcripts during the data analysis process. These themes were then used to form the basis for answering research question two.

**Interview question three.** If these perceived importances are different, how do you reconcile the difference? Twenty-four characteristics were identified as approaches professional women leaders use to reconcile authenticity between their professional and personal lives. From those 24 characteristics, four themes emerged. The four themes are presented in alphabetical order: (a) keeping personal and professional lives separate; (b) maintaining consistency between professional and personal lives; (c) placing more value on personal authenticity; and (d) using caution or compensating behavior in professional life. Figure 13 represents in descending order the number of characteristics attributed to each of the four themes.

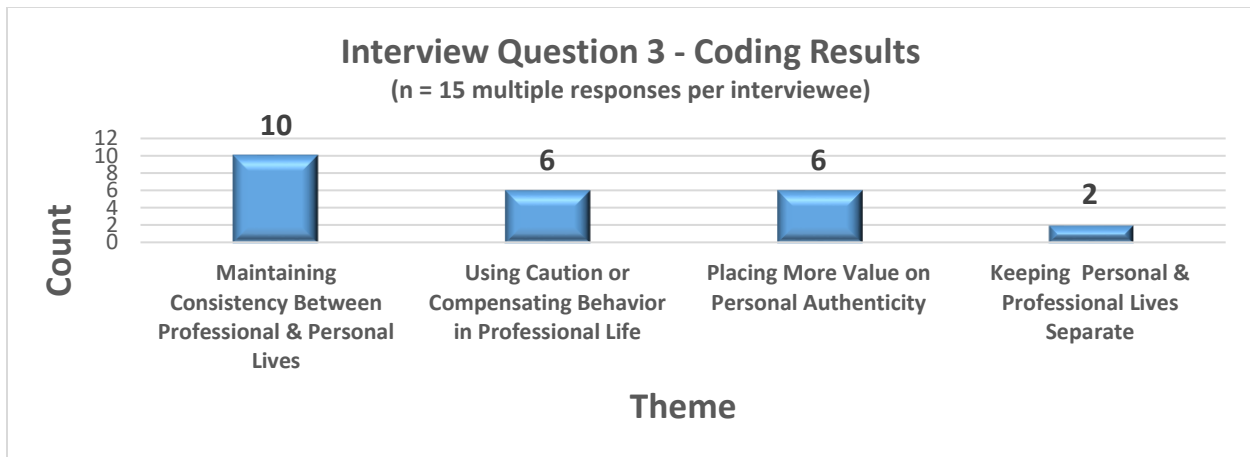


Figure 13. Approaches professional women leaders use to reconcile authenticity between their professional and personal lives.

***Maintaining consistency between professional and personal lives.*** The most prevalent theme related to interview question three was maintaining consistency between professional and personal lives with 10 occurrences (42%) being cited directly or indirectly by the interview participants. This question as it relates to research question two indicates that successful women leaders address the challenge of leading with authenticity by maintaining a consistent imagine in both their professional and personal lives, eliminating the need to reconcile between the two. For example, P12 who states “I don’t have to reconcile because at the end of the day I know who I am and I like myself” (P12, personal communication, February 13, 2017). Alternatively, P10 who claims that “Deep inside you know who you are, but you can’t act a certain way professionally and one personally (P10, personal communication, February 10, 2017). For P1 this process took time to develop, she admits that “You know, I think they probably were different, a long time ago. But, I would like to say I have merged into one person. Now, I am 76, so it took a darn long time to get it all glued together” (P1, personal communication, January 28, 2017).

The idea of building a personal brand through authenticity is conveyed by P8:

I try to make a line as thin as possible, meaning if I am with you in a business meeting I am going to conduct myself in such a way that is almost transparent to how I would be with you if you were someone in my life outside. People expect consistency, and that creates trustworthiness. In an organization with a team of people that you are working with, they know how I operate. This is what people can expect from me, you create that by consistently being your authentic self. When you do that over time, you create a reputation that soon becomes your personal brand. I reconcile it by being myself all the time (P8, personal communication, February 6, 2017).

This perspective was also communicated by P7 using the analogy of a glove:

They are not different; it is like the hand and the glove. You see the inside of me, that is the hand and what other people see is the glove, but it is the exact same pattern. So that is how I operate in everything that I do (P7, personal communication, February 4, 2017).

The implications and sustainability of reconciling different roles in life are addressed by P9 “I hope that I don’t have to reconcile it because I try not to have to. You can try, but if there is a gap and you can’t get rid of it. It can’t be healthy; it would have to be stressful. It is not sustainable” (P9, personal communications, February 7, 2017). P3, P4, P6 and P14 shared similar sentiments about maintaining a common thread in all dimensions of your life and how that contributes to the development of individual character.



***Using caution or compensating behavior in professional life.*** This theme is tied with the theme placing more value on personal authenticity as the second most prevalent theme related to interview question three, with six occurrences (25%) of it being cited directly or indirectly by the interview participants. This theme focuses on the need to make adjustments in behavior to meet an expectation of what a leader should be in a particular workplace culture. For example, P4 speaks to perhaps the overarching theme as to why women leaders are compelled to use caution or compensate in their professional life “I almost feel like work, because we’ve been in a male dominated environment, we have to play the game, and that means you can’t necessarily be as authentic as you want” (P4, personal compensation, January 30, 2017). The idea of compensating self in order to meet the perceived expectation of what a leader should be in a culture where males are dominant or the masculine stereotype of a leader is pervasive is communicated by P9 “For me I almost feel like I compensated for it in my personal life, because professionally I was trying to be super manly so I had to be super girly, doing girly things on the weekend” (P9, personal communication, February 7, 2017).

P10 addresses her concerns regarding sharing too much information in a working environment:

It is tough sometimes, even like in business meetings you still want to talk about your personal life so you can relate and so forth, but you have to be careful, I don’t want to disclose like the books I read or my favorite movies. I don’t want to open that world professionally because there are still bias and stereotypes and especially because I am younger and I look younger, I try to close that gap. I try

to make myself look older and whatever (P10, personal communication, February 10, 2017).

P13 also worries about sharing too much information at work “It is more about how much you share, at work, I think I have to be more cautious because I don’t want to be judged or treated differently because of my beliefs” (P13, personal communication, February 13, 2017). Comments from P2 and P5 share the same thoughts as communicated in their interview.

***Placing more value on personal authenticity.*** This theme is tied with the theme using caution or compensating behavior in professional life as the second most prevalent theme related to interview question three, with six occurrences (25%) of it being cited directly or indirectly by the interview participants. This theme focuses on the importance of adhering to authenticity. P4 supports her position of valuing personal authenticity in the following statement:

The personal is more important because for work if I feel like I no longer trust or don’t want to work with anyone, I’ll try and transfer a job and stuff. But in your personal life, I guess I could have divorced him or whatever, but you can’t divorce your kids, you’re kind of stuck with them. That is why it is more important to me on a personal level to have that authenticity (P4, personal communication, January 30<sup>th</sup>, 2017).

P13 also values her personal authenticity when it relates to being accepted and not judged “In my personal environment I can just be me and not worry about being judged

for what I believe, also in your personal life you are more willing to accept because it is a relationship that you choose” (P13, personal communication, February 13, 2017).

From a deeply personal perspective, P7 speaks of personal authenticity and the need to live by truth:

I am a truth seeker, and I speak the truth, it has been like that from day one, since I was a little kid. Women are trained from very early on that you are to be nice, I hate that word nice. That means basically to lie, that is what nice means to me. I just can't accept that, because it is not even biblically correct, that is the whole point (P7, personal communication, February 4, 2017).

P11 reflects on a personal level of authenticity as it relates to the significance of having true friendships and personal relationships “with my true friends it is like we knew each other in high school, we know each other deep down. There is a connection there; you can tell them anything” (P11, personal communication, February 11, 2017).

P6 and P8 shared through their comments how being authentic personally sets a foundation to express authenticity in other aspects of your life.

***Keeping personal and professional lives separate.*** This theme is related to interview question three, with two occurrences (8%) of it being cited directly or indirectly by the interview participants. This theme focuses on maintaining separate images for a different aspect of your life. For example, P15 states that “I don't know how I necessarily reconciled it, other than my personal and professional life being separate, so it wasn't too difficult for me to not turn the switch on and off” (P15, personal communication, February 16, 2017). P1 reflects on a time in her earlier life “You know, I

think they probably were different, a long time ago. But, I would like to say I have merged into one person. It took a long time because I would separate work and home and this and that” (P1, personal communication January 28, 2017).

**Interview question four.** How difficult is it for you to be authentic as a leader? Twenty-five characteristics were identified regarding the difficulty that professional women leaders attribute to being an authentic leader. From those 25 characteristics, five themes emerged. The five themes are presented in alphabetical order: (a) comes naturally; (b) depends on environment and culture; (c) developed over time; (d) easier to be authentic than not; and (e) finds it difficult. Figure 14 represents in descending order the number of characteristics attributed to each of the five themes.

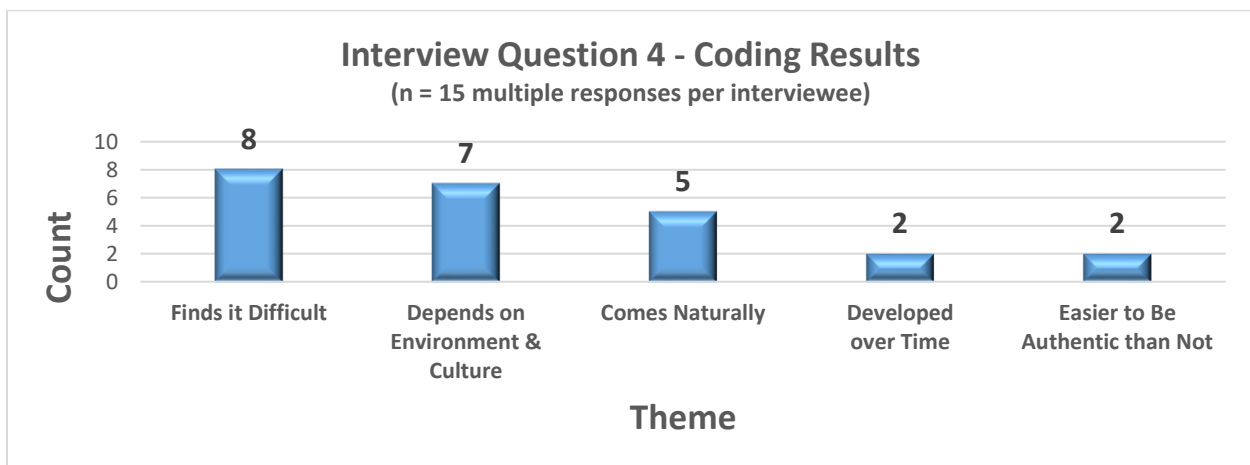


Figure 14. The difficulty that professional women leaders attribute to being an authentic leader.

**Finds it difficult.** The most prevalent theme related to interview question four was finds it difficult, with eight occurrences (33%) being cited directly or indirectly by the interview participants. This question as it relates to research question two indicates that professional women leaders find the challenge of leading with authenticity difficult. For

example, P7 speaks to these difficulties as it relates to the expected female gender role, she states:

It is very difficult because as a women not only are we supposed to be nice, but we are supposed to be in relationship, that is the core of who we are but I cannot bend to what I am not, and if I am in a culture where they are asking me to do that I probably will have to leave (P7, personal communication, February 4, 2017).

P8 addresses the difficulties communicating across gender in her statement:

I think with corporate politics it can be difficult, you don't always know how much you can share and as a women I have learned that sometimes you have to just stick to the data and share the facts and use your logical side of your brain and not share all the colorful details (P8, personal communication, February 6, 2017).

Such adjustments can place a toll on women leaders over time as mentioned by P9 "I had to put extra energy into how my approach would be perceived by my manager and how it would be accepted by him. I hated it" (P9, personal communication, February 7, 2017).

Other comments regarding the difficulty of leading with authenticity include P5 who speaks to the importance of aligning what we say and what we do "If the rhetoric is one thing and the actions are something different then I can't be authentic" (P5, personal communication, February 4, 2017). Additionally, P4 asserts that "I find it is difficult, to be honest, I need to have a better poker face" (P4, personal communication, January 30, 2017). Statements from P1, P11, and P14 affirm similar difficulties.

***Depends on environment and culture.*** The second most prevalent theme related to interview question four was depends on environment and culture, with seven occurrences (29%) being cited directly or indirectly by the interview participants. This theme focuses on the ability to be authentic being dependent on the environment or culture. A common difficulty among the participants included dimensions of culture and the effect that it has on the alignment of values while achieving goals. P5 states “Solid alignment of values and a clear understanding of vision, strategy, and goals. If those things are in alignment, I can be authentic” (P5, personal communication, February 4, 2017). How the culture responds toward the achievement of goals was also a concern as noted by P10:

There are times in the professional world that you are pushed a certain way because of goals or things that are on the line, you have to do this or that. I can recall one time from my whole career that I felt really bad because I had to discipline an employee almost every single day. I would have to talk to her, and you could say that it was downgrading and so forth and after that situation, I just felt really bad because that is not me. But the corporate world was like that, you need to do that, you have to do this, and that was probably one of the reasons I left (P10, personal communication, February 10, 2017)

P9 speaks to both culture and gender and how she learned to adjust her expression of self to appease her manager:

I think it depends on the situation and the culture that you are in. I felt like I had to tone down on the motherly and feminine side of business. My manager was

masculine in his business dealings and expected everyone to do business in a similar fashion (P9, personal communication February 7, 2017).

The environment was another element of difficulty among the participants, particularly with P11 who sums it up with “I think in order to be authentic as a leader the environment and culture needs to support it” (P11, personal communication, February 11, 2017). Similar comments were ascertained from P4, P7, and P13.

***Comes naturally.*** This theme is related to interview question four, with five occurrences (21%) being cited directly or indirectly by the interview participants. This theme focus on authenticity being a natural state for some. P6 clearly articulates her position regarding her ability to be authentic in her declaration:

I don't think it is that difficult; I am who I am where ever I am. I have always been that way. That has been a core thing for me. I have to know who I am, what my core values are, and I have to stand by that in the workplace. Now, if I take a job and find out that what management is requiring of me is different than what I thought it was going to be. If it totally goes against the grain of my core values and I realize I am in the wrong place. I need to graciously make my exit. (P6, personal communication, February 4, 2017)

P1, P2, P3 and P10 all claim that authenticity comes naturally to them and that they find leading with authenticity not particularly difficult.

***Developed over time.*** This theme is tied with the theme easier to be authentic than not and is related to interview question four, with two occurrences (8%) being cited directly or indirectly by the interview participants. This theme focuses on the idea that

authenticity is something that is developed and honed over time. The idea that authenticity is something that is developed experientially is conveyed by P12:

It is easy for me now, because I own my own business and because I have been in a leadership role for many, many years. But, it wasn't all that easy, say 20 years ago, when I was coming up the career ladder so to speak and had good male managers. Being authentic was not something that came up in reviews, it was never discussed in meetings, nor discussed in development training. There may have been other words that danced around it, but at the end of the day, understanding yourself and being who you are, being real, and understanding your sense of self is crucial. You have to determine what that means to you. Once you get that, then how you relate to others and how you are portrayed by others, I believe you will attract likeminded people that way (P12, personal communications, February 13, 2017).

P15 comments on her experience developing authenticity:

So again it is not as difficult now because it is something that is important to me. Something that I guess over the years I have made important to the people that I am leading, or as I have kind of come up in leadership, I have been more authentic. They know that is how I am. Getting to this point was probably a little more difficult and I think earlier in my career I wasn't as authentic. Like it is hard to kind of make that switch, it is kind of a slow switch (P15, personal communications, February 16, 2017).



**Easier to be authentic than not.** This theme is tied with the theme developed over time and is related to interview question four, with two occurrences (8%) being cited directly or indirectly by the interview participants. This theme focuses on the idea that some people find it easier to be authentic than to pretend to be someone else. Both P9 and P13 shared those experiences expressing “It took extra energy and was so stressful, It is actually more difficult not to be authentic” and “It is actually easier for me to be authentic than not” (P9, personal communication, February 7, 2017; P13 personal communication, February 13, 2017).

**Interview question five.** Has leading with authenticity ever become an obstacle to your success as a leader? Twenty-one characteristics were identified as obstacles to leadership success by professional women who led with authenticity. From those 12 characteristics, six themes emerged. The six themes are presented in alphabetical order: (a) being true to self, genuine; (b) family commitments; (c) gender differences; (d) my management; (e) value differences; and (f) work environment and culture. Figure 15 represents in descending order the number of characteristics attributed to each of the five themes.

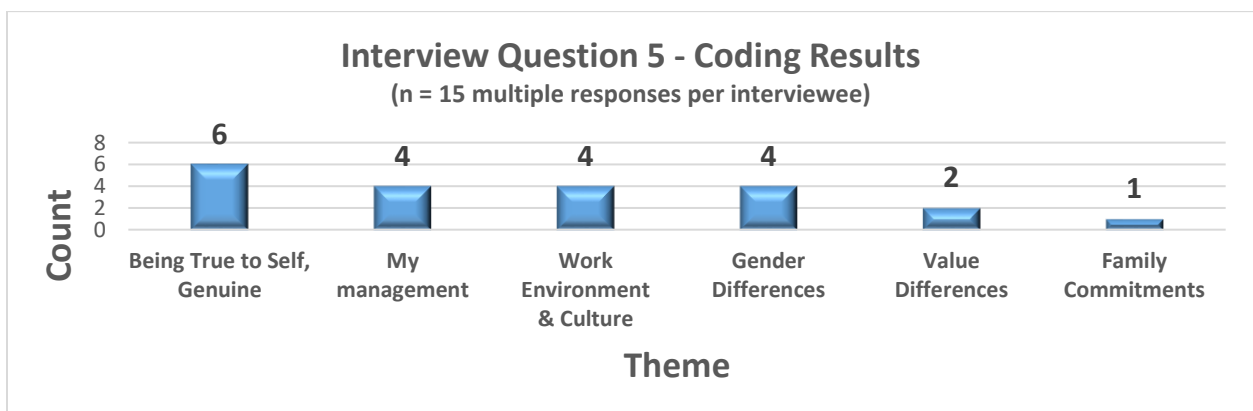


Figure 15. Obstacles to leadership success by professional women who lead with authenticity.

***Being true to self, genuine.*** The most prevalent theme related to interview question five was being true to self, genuine, with six occurrences (29%) being cited directly or indirectly by the interview participants. This question as it relates to research question two indicates that successful women leaders address the challenge of leading with authenticity by overcoming the obstacle of being true to self, genuine. For example, P1 reveals her perspective regarding conflict with upper management and questioning whether or not to remain true to her beliefs:

There have been times where personalities clash and especially, I think, working in health care we have a different perspective, and there are times when there are clashes with the upper echelon, and you have to really decide, are you going to stay authentic (P1, personal communication, January 28, 2017).

P2 openly admits that at times she has had to compromise her authenticity to advance her agenda “I have always tried to get my point across, just sometimes I had to maybe not show 100% authenticity” (P2, personal communication, January 28, 2017). Similarly, as a result of compromising her own authenticity P9 shares “trying to find that compromise, I feel like I didn’t earn my own respect in some ways” (P9, personal communication, February 7, 2017). Perhaps the most dramatic account of a female having to not be true to self to be successful is the account of P12:

Being from the South, I had never dealt with people issues related to cultural backgrounds. Being an attractive woman in her middle 20’s and being an engineer, I stood out because I was the only female on my team. But it was something that really took me back because I wasn’t understanding why I was treated differently. One of my peers actually sat me down one day and tried to

explain it to me. You can't just be yourself, and expect everyone to relate to you that way. You have got to become a little bit more reserved (P12, personal communications, February 13, 2017).

P11 and P14 both communicated their displeasure of having to be less than authentic at times to position themselves for success.

***My management.*** This theme is tied with the two themes work environment and culture and gender differences and is related to interview question five, with four occurrences (19%) being cited directly or indirectly by the interview participants. This theme focuses on the obstacles that management can pose to a woman's leadership success and her ability to lead with authenticity. For example, P8 recollects a time when she felt that management perceived authenticity as a weakness:

The impression I remember having is that corporate executives thought that by being authentic you are showing your weaknesses and that you don't have it all together. Executives don't want to show any weaknesses, so that contradicts authenticity, so they are out of integrity (P8, personal communication, February 6, 2017).

P9 recalls a similar situation:

In my last job yes, he did not see the merits of being a feminine leader. Had I just been true to my style of leadership, my manager would have seen me as weak, and I would not have earned his respect (P9, personal communication, February 7, 2017).

P11 was limited in her ability to lead due to a difference in leadership styles and how she and her management displayed authenticity. She explains “Being authentic was me caring for my team and being responsible for my team. Even if things were not perfect, I wanted to be there for them and to be a mentor, and I was not allowed to do that” (P11, personal communication, February 11, 2017). Lastly, P10 also shared her experience regarding management and their ability to discourage authenticity.

***Work environment and culture.*** This theme is tied with the two themes my management and gender differences and is related to interview question five, with four occurrences (19%) being cited directly or indirectly by the interview participants. This theme focuses on the work environment and culture of the organization and its impact on authenticity. P4 speaks to a work culture where she is forced to make sure that she protects herself, limiting her ability to remain authentic, her story is as follows:

Yes, and it really makes it hard to play the corporate ladder game. Part of it is because the way people are. Like how they are with DISC or Myers-Briggs, you could say the same thing to four people, and they all take it differently. I want to be authentic, but at the same time, I have to cover my butt. I have to make sure that I am protected. So, if somebody does take it wrong, like the occurrence before, I have my ducks in a row, and that is not me. I am a more transparent; this is how I am kind of thing. So it has been a struggle (P4, personal conversation, January 30, 2017).

P7 proclaims that leading with authenticity is defined by the world and has been an obstacle to her leadership success in the past. However, she explains that today there are options:

Yes, as the world defines it absolutely. I cannot fulfill your expectations as you see them so. Therefore, I am not successful. That is why the game doesn't play, it doesn't work, and that is why I have decided to do my own thing. To make it work because I think there is a whole group of people who are singing the same song that I am. Those are the people that I want to reach; I don't want to reach this other group that I have been banging my head over because that is not my only option. Because it is a global world now, I have a bigger pool, and I don't feel like a lone voice. I think I resonate something that is very true to not just females but being true to humanness and being true to who you are. So, in the sense of being successful as the world defines success, yea, I am never successful, I lose. Either, I said too much, or I didn't say enough whatever, then I just can't win your game (P7, personal communications, February 4, 2017).

P2 and P11 both shared situations regarding obstacles to leadership success and authenticity involving certain work cultures and environments.

***Gender differences.*** This theme is tied with the two themes my management and culture and work environment and is related to interview question five, with four occurrences (19%) being cited directly or indirectly by the interview participants. This theme focuses on leadership style differences between genders and the masculine stereotype that is commonly associated with a leadership role. For example, P9 speaks to the power of the feminine leadership style and how it may be perceived as an obstacle to a woman's leadership success:

I think it is sad that we have to think about that. The fact that to be authentic would put up an obstacle in any way shape or form because like I said I think

there is something about being an authentic womanly feminine leader that has some power. I mean think about it. On a day to day basis, women already have to be leaders because we are mothers, that is what we are programmed to be. So, by trying to fight that, we are fighting our natural nature, taking away something that we were born to be good at. It saddens me to know that when you work with certain people, you have to think about obstacles that are put up because of that (P9, personal communication, February 7, 2017).

The experiences of P12 did not relate to differences in leadership style, rather the gender differences related to how she was perceived in the workplace and how that affected her ability to remain authentic. She recalls:

I was very friendly and open with people. But with clients, sometimes they would read that the wrong way. So, I had to learn the hard way that I had to pull back. At that time, I wasn't as confident as I am today in being genuine and understanding. So, when I was being read the wrong way, I didn't really get why people were reacting to me differently (P12, personal communication, February 13, 2017).

Lastly, P13 contributes with regard to gender differences that "it has affected me in the workplace as women being compared to men" (P13, personal communication, February 13, 2017).

**Value differences.** This theme is related to interview question five, with two occurrences (10%) being cited directly or indirectly by the interview participants. This

theme focuses on the obstacles caused by the differences in values and how that affects authenticity and leadership style. For example, P5 responds to the question as:

Yes, yes, so that has happened on a few occasions actually because I cannot breach that. After that meeting, I told them [my board] that they could fire me, but that I was not signing this contract. Just not going to, they were too afraid to do anything, and I would not do it, I could not do, and I was willing to risk my job to take a stand (P5, personal communication, February 4, 2017).

P6 shares her thoughts regarding differences of values and how it can impede progress “In staying true to my values, it is going to come against the values of others, whether profit or non-profit. The situation can get tough; it slows you down. You have to stop and think how you are going to move through it” (P6, personal communication, February 4, 2017).

***Family commitments.*** This theme is related to interview question five, with one occurrence (5%) being cited directly or indirectly by the interview participants. This theme focuses on the obstacles caused by family commitments. P15 responds to this questions with:

Yes, I think so, again like taking my career. I am an attorney, in order to keep moving up the chain it takes a lot of work. I still want to be a leader I just can't dedicate that amount of time. So, it has been an obstacle because I have a family and I just don't want to compromise that (P15, personal communication, February 16, 2017).

**Interview question six.** Have you ever regretted being authentic? What were the circumstances? Thirteen characteristics were identified as the regrets that professional women leaders experience for practicing authenticity. From those 13 characteristics, four themes emerged. The four themes are presented in alphabetical order: (a) cost me my job; (b) felt threatened or betrayed; (c) had to change my behavior, and (d) perceived as weak. Figure 16 represents in descending order the number of characteristics attributed to each of the four themes.

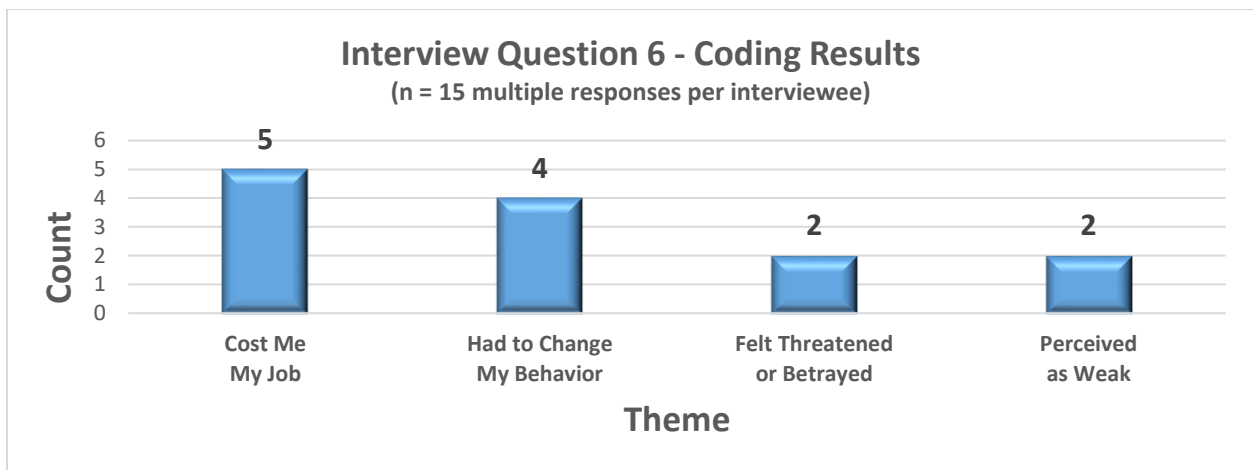


Figure 16. Regrets that professional women leaders experience for practicing authenticity.

**Cost me my job.** The most prevalent theme related to interview question six was cost me my job, with five occurrences (38%) being cited directly or indirectly by the interview participants. This question as it relates to research question two indicates that successful women leaders address the challenges of leading with authenticity and experience regret when it costs them their job. Participants communicated regret by means of leaving their job, working with specific contractors or interviewing for a job. Three of the participants chose to leave their jobs, however each for a different reason. P1 recalls leaving her job because she and her manager did not get along, she states “I probably would have stayed working there, but it would have been cruel for me and my



staff, and it opened another door for me. I lead it back to the authenticity of me saying “I know you don’t want me here, here is how you get rid of me” (P1, personal communication, January 28, 2016).

P5 speaks to her regrets as follows:

So, have I ever regretted being authentic, yes, the circumstances were that I could not bridge the distance between the rhetoric and the action, I could not bridge it and lead through that because I was hurting people. I know I was really hurting people and part of it is, I just couldn’t do it to people. I couldn’t do it anymore at a bigger scale where you are saying one thing and actually doing something else to get people to move through a process where they would lose livelihoods, lose a lot, and I just I would not do it. I could not be authentic and do it, so I left, and so it is a risk (P5, personal communication, February 4, 2017).

P11 shares her experience in choosing to leave her job to start her own business:

I am making a lot less than I was financially. But I will get back there, and I will need to build my business again, but almost immediately I could sleep at night again. I feel better, and I am happier. Financially, it’s a little more stressful, because I am not making the same money that I used to. For me it isn’t about the money, it is about the environment and being able to be authentic (P11, personal communication, February 11, 2017).

P14 recalls a conflict with a supplier that could have impacted her financial livelihood “I was almost hesitant to sell plans from that company at that point. If you are the person

that I have to work with, then I don't know" (P14, personal communication, February 15, 2017).

***Had to change my behavior.*** This theme is the second most prevalent theme related to interview question six, with four occurrences (31%) of it being cited directly or indirectly by the interview participants. This theme focuses on situations where participants felt like regret caused them to make adjustments to their behavior at work. For example, P8 shares her experience:

There have been a few times when I have spoken up and have second guessed myself, maybe I spoke too quickly. However, that is usually a risk that I am willing to take, Female executive's error on the side of not speaking up; it is about emotional intelligence too. When you have an opinion, sometimes you need to know when to speak up and know when to not (P8, personal communication, February 6, 2017).

P7 shares a similar experience regarding speaking too quickly and being too confrontational:

So, me being a spiritual mentor and being true to myself, if I would have delayed my confrontations, Maybe it would have been better if I had used more softer language, so I am learning in that sense, yet still trying to be true to myself. That has been a real tricky balance, so that part I do sort of regret. I am learning from all of that (P7, personal confrontation, February 4, 2017).

P12 and P13 cite situations of regret that pertain to staying true to self and accepting the consequences of that and also sharing too much.

***Felt threatened or betrayed.*** This theme is tied with the theme perceived as weak and is related to interview question six, with two occurrences (15%) of it being cited directly or indirectly by the interview participants. This theme focuses on situations where participants felt like their authenticity caused them to feel threatened or betrayed by others. For example, P5 shares:

So, I felt very threatened in that environment and very unsafe in that environment, and so I chose to leave. So for me it is the loss of making a difference and the opportunity, the dream, the relationships and all of those things. It is a risk when you chose to be authentic, so if authenticity means you have to leave, then you leave (P5, personal communication, February 4, 2017).

P4 experienced a situation of betrayal and dishonesty while attempting to be transparent and authentic. She recants her situations as:

I was trying to be real transparent with her and spelling out why she didn't get it [her bonus], and she turned around and told the other gal that I told her what she got [her bonus]. It was like, wait I never said that, and unfortunately for me I had taken the next week off. So, things got totally blown out of proportion while I was gone, with no way to defend myself. So yea, it was like one of those people who just lie to your face, and that is a real struggle for me. I expect people to treat me like I treat them, and when they don't, it is like, first of all, I am like mind boggled, and then I am like OK, so I got to treat this person different. So, I can't be authentic, because she is going to twist everything I say and make it different (P4, personal communication, January 30, 2017).

***Perceived as weak.*** This theme is tied with the theme felt threatened or betrayed and is related to interview question six, with two occurrences (15%) of it being cited directly or indirectly by the interview participants. This theme focuses on times when participants felt their authenticity caused them to be perceived as weak by others. For example, P2 shared an experience where she regretted asking for help:

So years ago, when I was in training, trying to go out on my own, and start advising my clients. I didn't have the confidence yet. So I told my manager, can you help me out, a couple of times, can you go to my appointment with me, just sit there and if I fall short somewhere just kind of fill in and help me out. I feel like that put me in a different box in his eyes. So, I feel like maybe I shouldn't have been so honest about not being ready and maybe I should have just faked it until I made it kind of a situation because my other classmates who were men they excelled a lot faster in the beginning than I did. In my manager's eyes, I felt like he thought I was the weakest of the group (P2, personal communications, January 28, 2017).

P12 share a situation where she felt like her authenticity was perceived as a liability or detriment to her organization.

**Summary of research question two.** Research question two sought to identify the barriers and challenges that successful women leaders face leading with authenticity. Four interview questions were designed to investigate how women leaders reconcile the differences between authenticity in their professional and personal lives, the level of difficulty they experience while leading authentically, the obstacles they have encountered and any regrets they may have experienced. Nineteen themes

emerged from the four interview questions they are as follows: (a) maintaining consistency between professional and personal lives; (b) using caution or compensating behavior in professional life; (c) placing more value on personal authenticity; (d) keeping personal and professional lives separate; (e) finds it difficult; (f) depends on environment and culture; (g) comes naturally; (h) developed over time; (i) easier to be authentic than not; (j) being true to self, genuine; (k) my management; (l) work environment and culture; (m) gender differences; (n) value differences; (o) family commitments; (p) cost me my job; (q) had to change my behavior, (r) felt threatened or betrayed; and (s) perceived as weak.

The most significant themes identifying the barriers and challenges are directly related to four interview questions and will be addressed individually. The most significant finding related to IQ3 indicates at 42% that there is no need to reconcile the differences of authenticity between professional and person lives. Career success for a woman leader is highly dependent upon her ability to maintain consistency between her professional and personal lives. For example, P8 states that “When you do that over time you create a reputation that soon becomes your personal brand. So, I reconcile it by being myself all the time” (P8, personal communication, February 6, 2017).

The most significant finding related to IQ4 indicates at 33% that being an authentic leader is difficult, and for many reasons. The literature suggests that much of it is attributed to the patriarchal image of the “ideal worker,” where individuals are expected to commit 100% devotion to the organization (Reid, 2015). The “ideal worker” image embraced by organizations lies in direct contrast to the socialized gender role expectation of women as caregivers and mothers (Cha, 2013). This contrast in

expectations causes prejudice in the workplace for females, as the male stereotype of leadership with the gender role of females, influences others to perceive women as inferior to men (Eagly and Karau, 2002).

The findings for IQ5 indicates at 33% that the most significant obstacle to overcome is being true to self, genuine. This theme while expressed by participants as the most important contribution to leading with authenticity (RQ1), it is also the most significant obstacle to overcome. As a woman, being authentic while maintaining a consistent identity and remaining true to yourself is challenging.

The finding for IQ6 indicates at 38% that the most significant regret for women who displayed authenticity was that they lost or had to leave their job. P5 expresses the regret of having to leave her job to remain authentic to who she is as a person: “So for me, it is the loss of making a difference and the opportunity, the dream, the relationships and all of those things. So it is a risk when you chose to be authentic, so if authenticity means you have to leave, then you leave” (P5, personal communication, February 4, 2017).

### **Research Question Three**

Research question three sought to identify the strategies that successful women leaders employ to lead authentically. Two interview questions were designed to investigate the research question; they are as follows:

IQ 7: How do you maintain your authenticity as a leader?

IQ 8: If you ever have a setback from being authentic, how do you recover?

Themes related to the interview questions emerged from the interview transcripts during the data analysis process. These themes were then used to form the basis for answering research question three.

**Interview question seven.** How do you maintain your authenticity as a leader?

Twenty-six characteristics were identified as ways professional women leaders maintain their authenticity as a leader. From those 26 characteristics, six themes emerged. The six themes are presented in alphabetical order: (a) being self-aware; (b) being transparent; (c) doing the right thing; (d) faith, prayer, and reflection; (e) overcoming fear, having confidence; and (f) seeking support from strong women and friends. Figure 17 represents in descending order the number of characteristics attributed to each of the six themes.

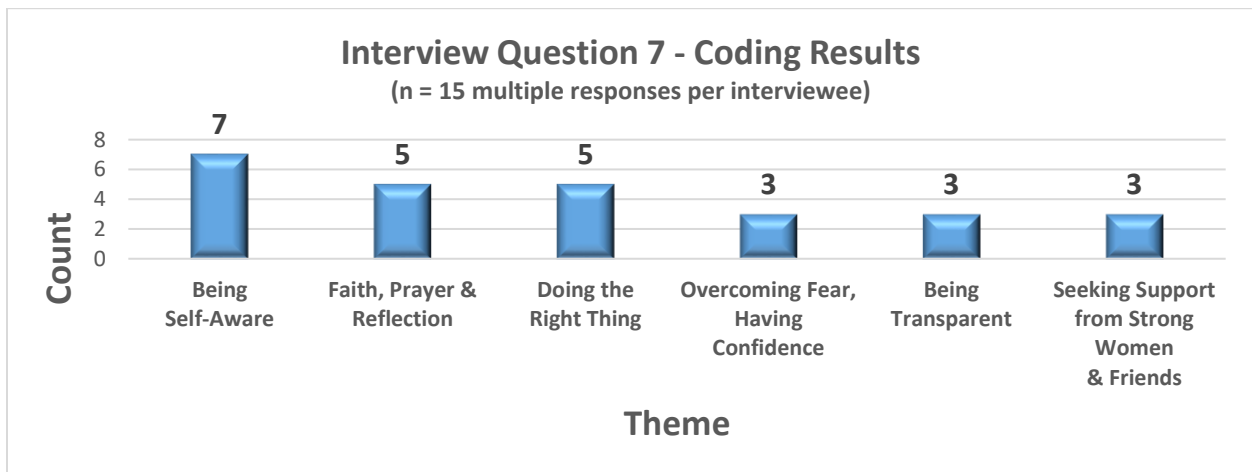


Figure 17. Ways professional women leaders maintain their authenticity as a leader.

**Being self-aware.** The most prevalent theme related to interview question seven was being self-aware, with seven occurrences (27%) being cited directly or indirectly by the interview participants. This question as it relates to research question three identifies being self-aware as the strategy that successful women leaders employ to

lead with and maintain their authenticity. P3 and P13 cite that “Just by being myself, it is not hard to maintain because you just do it. It’s nothing I even think about” and “I think that I just know who I am now, I don’t have to think about it as much” articulating that maintaining authenticity is not necessary once you are clear of your self-identity (P3, personal communication, January 29, 2017; P13, personal communication, February 13, 2017). P9 reiterates that “I know that when my culture feels comfortable, my authenticity just comes naturally” (P9, personal communication, February 7, 2017). In today’s fast moving business environment, P5 stresses the importance of maintaining self-aware balance:

Take a look at the self-awareness and the velocity we move at in businesses and organizations; it is really hard I think to stay in that self-aware balance. I was clearly out of balance, I was in a new environment, I was on airplanes, and I hadn’t landed long enough to unpack everything, the velocity of work is destabilizing and really challenges people’s abilities to stay balanced. So I think first and foremost I need to have balance (P5, personal communication, February 4, 2017).

P15 reminds herself to recall the past as a strategy to maintain her authenticity “I remind myself of where I was and how it felt not to be authentic” (P15, personal communication, February 16, 2017). Additionally, P8 and P12 shared the importance of self-awareness as a means to maintaining authenticity.

***Faith, prayer, and reflection.*** This theme is tied with the theme doing the right thing as the second most prevalent theme related to interview question seven, with five



occurrences (19%) of it being cited directly or indirectly by the interview participants. This theme focuses on a connection with God and self as a means to help maintain authenticity. For example, P12 sustains a program that mixes a number of strategies to help her maintain her authenticity “I meditate, I practice yoga, and I do a lot of physical activities. It is very important that you spend time with yourself. Meaning, being alone and really look within yourself” (P12, personal communication, February 13, 2017).

A connection with God and prayer was a common strategy among P7, P11, and P6. P6 elaborated on her connection by having this to say:

Personally, I maintain it [authenticity] because my ground zero and my base is the Bible. So my connection to God and my prayer life and being connected to him and constantly communicating and listening and talking. More listening than talking, the principles help to ground me to who I am. He reflects that to me (P6, personal communication, February 4, 2017).

Lastly, P5, stressed the importance of using reflection as a means to obtaining perspective as noted in the following statement:

I need to have reflective time that is just my construct. Maybe I process somethings slowly; I don't know. I think that is part of the business realm; if you keep people busy enough, then they don't have time to think about things. It's classic, I just look and go this is it, I am living the dream, girlfriend is getting off of this merry-go-round (P5, personal communications, February 4, 2017).

***Doing the right thing.*** This theme is tied with the theme faith, prayer and reflection as the second most prevalent theme related to interview question seven, with

five occurrences (19%) of it being cited directly or indirectly by the interview participants. This theme focuses on moral and ethical judgment as a means to maintain authenticity. For example, P11 uses her sense of judgment as a guide “I consider how I feel about a decision that I make. If I feel good about the decision, I know that I am being true to myself and that to me indicates that I am making the right decision” (P11, personal communication, February 11, 2017). Similarly, P10 adds “I feel that if I can sleep at night and if I had done the ethical thing, then I am ok” (P10, personal communication, February 10, 2017).

P5 had this to say “So part of maintaining your authenticity is making a statement one way or another, you have to be in better balance of what you allow for and stay true to yourself, and you have to do that often” (P5, personal communication, February 4, 2017). P4 and P6 also shared their perspective with regard to leading by example and staying true to your values by doing the right thing.

***Overcoming fear, having confidence.*** This theme is tied with the two themes being transparent and seeking support from strong women and friends and is related to interview question seven, with three occurrences (12%) of it being cited directly or indirectly by the interview participants. This theme focuses on dealing with both fear and confidence as a means of maintaining authenticity. For example, P8 states:

I build up my self-confidence, I know what my strengths are, I know my personality, I know my preferences, I understand what my zone of genius is, and I work in that. I think that when I have that self-confidence, I can maintain my authenticity (P8, personal communication, February 6, 2017).

Additional insight with regard to building confidence and dealing with the opposite gender was provided by P2 “I think years of experience has contributed to it, you get older, and you get wiser, and I don’t have that confidence issue with working with men anymore” (P2, personal communication, January 28, 2017). With respect to overcoming fear, P5 has this to contribute “So have to be willing to take the risk and step off, and you could do that by taking different position, you could change your work all together, you could do it a number of different ways” (P5, personal communication, February 4, 2017).

***Being transparent.*** This theme is tied with the two themes overcoming fear, having confidence and seeking support from strong women and friends, it is related to interview question seven, with three occurrences (12%) of it being cited directly or indirectly by the interview participants. This theme focuses on allowing yourself to be vulnerable by exposing all aspects of self as a means for maintaining their authenticity. For example, P14 emphasized that “If you can’t have a true conversation with somebody then it is not going to go anywhere and that applies to both professional and personal” (P14, personal communication, February 15, 2017). P4 uses transparency to ensure she sets the right expectations for her team “I flat out tell them that I have high standards. This is what I expect from you. I also try to be as transparent as I can, especially things that come from above” (P4, personal communication, January 30, 2017). With respect to self, P9 states “I want to make sure that I am not lying to myself and not setting unreal expectations” (P9, personal communication, February 7, 2017).

***Seeking support from strong women and friends.*** This theme is tied with the two themes overcoming fear, having confidence and being transparent, it is related to

interview question seven, with three occurrences (12%) of it being cited directly or indirectly by the interview participants. This theme focuses on building a support group as a means for maintaining authenticity. For example, P15 admits “I don’t think that there is anything that I do that is intentional other than just surround myself with friends that are truly authentic” (P15, personal communication, February 16, 2017). That strategy is also shared with P9 “Surrounding myself with other strong women” and P1 “I go to other managers, maybe an equal or a small group of people that I have to work with” (P9, personal communication, February 7, 2017; P1, personal communication, January 28, 2017).

**Interview question eight.** If you ever have a setback from being authentic, how do you recover? Twenty-six characteristics were identified as ways that professional women leaders recover after experiencing a setback from being authentic. From those 26 characteristics, six themes emerged. The six themes are presented in alphabetical order: (a) don’t take it personal; (b) faith, prayer, and reflection; (c) find my own path, move forward; (d) it takes time; (e) make amends, apologize; and (f) seek counsel and support from others. Figure 18 represents in descending order the number of characteristics attributed to each of the six themes.

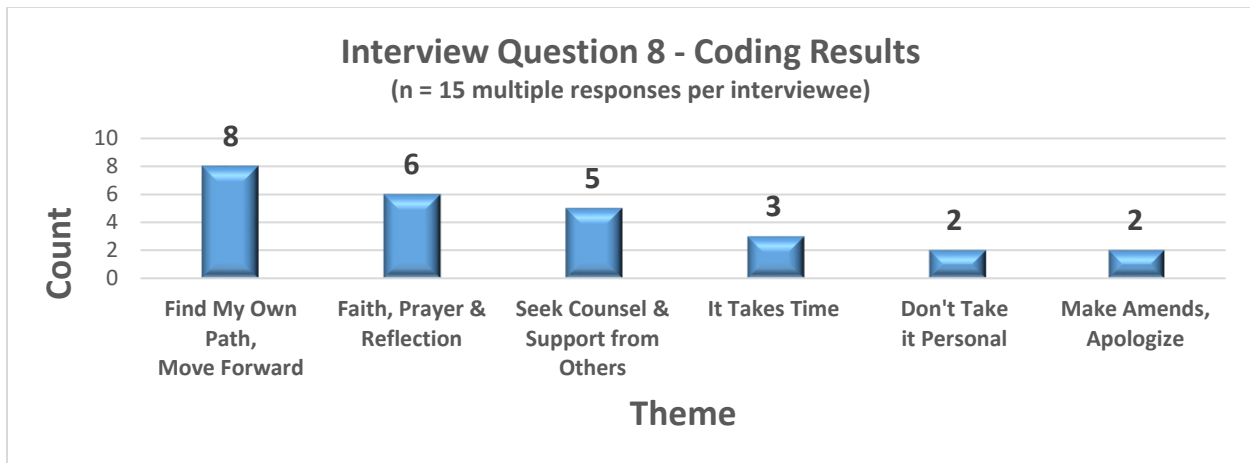


Figure 18. Ways that professional women leaders recover after experiencing a setback from being authentic.

**Find my own path, move forward.** The most prevalent theme related to interview question eight was find my own path, move forward, with eight occurrences (31%) being cited directly or indirectly by the interview participants. This question as it relates to research question three identifies find my own path, move forward as the strategies that successful women leaders employ to recover after experiencing a setback from being authentic. For example, P2 stated, “I just kind of learned to depend on myself and deal with these things on my own” (P2, personal communication, January 28, 2017). P6 added, “Going back to the basics, pulling myself back to what I know to be true” (P6, personal communication, February 4, 2017). P9 encourages us to go back and make sure the movement forward is the right move “We have to step back and ask, how can I be my best person? It is our responsibility to ask the question if we are fighting the right battles for ourselves and for the people around us” (P9, personal communication, February 7, 2017). Whereas P15 states that the only viable option is to “Just accept it. The other option would be to be unauthentic” (P15, personal communication, February 16, 2017).

Perhaps the most inspiring option of recovery is that offered by P11:

In the end I went back to what I love, and I am back in my own business,  
Recovering is finding more of my own path, Lord willing that all of this works out,  
I feel like I am more valued and rewarded for my work, and I have more self-pride  
too (P11, personal communication, February 11, 2017).

P1 after experiencing a job loss had this to say “I have never experienced this and I was pretty numb, but I knew I had to get over it. I had to get past it; I had to really, pull myself up” (P1, personal communication, January 28, 2017). Similar statements were also provided by P7 and P10.

***Faith, prayer, and reflection.*** This theme is the second most prevalent theme related to interview question eight, with six occurrences (23%) of it being cited directly or indirectly by the interview participants. This theme focuses on a connection with God and self as a means to recover after experiencing a setback from being authentic. For example, P5 acknowledges that with any setback comes grief and the importance of recognizing that:

There is some sort of grief that comes out of that, there is a loss there that needs to be acknowledged and dealt with, taking some time to, if you can afford to step back and think about what you want to do can really mean a lot (P5, personal communication, February 4, 2017).

Consistent with the idea of contemplation are the ideas presented by P6, P8, P13 and P15 where we are urged to reflect on our actions, question whether it was the right

action and to consider any potential alternatives. Alternatively, we could take the advice of P1 “You pray a lot” (P1, personal communication, January 28, 2017).

***Seeks counsel and support from others.*** This theme is related to interview question eight, with five occurrences (19%) being cited directly or indirectly by the interview participants. This theme focuses on seeking support from others when trying to recover from a setback. For example, P4 admits “I have gotten some counseling. Having mentors is really important, especially for us women in the workplace. It helps to get it [support] from a women’s perspective because they have gone through the same thing” (P4, personal communication, January 30, 2017). P2 and P5 claim that “recovery back then was more about having a support system” and “Surrounding myself with people that I love, and that love me, having that support is huge” (P2, personal communication, January 28, 2017; P5, personal communication, February 4, 2017).

Of special note is the comment provided by P7 regarding the importance of support from a spouse. “I bounce it off of my husband; he is a very strong supporter of who I am, he believes in me, he knows who I am” (P7, personal communication, February 4, 2017). P1 also outlines the importance of gaining support from outside groups “I have a lot of church friends who helped hold me up as well” (P1, personal communication, January 28, 2017).

***It takes time.*** This theme is related to interview question eight, with three occurrences (12%) being cited directly or indirectly by the interview participants. This theme focuses on the recovery through the passage of time. For example, P12 states that “It takes a long time for people to get this if they ever get it” (P12, personal

communication, February 13, 2017). P2 and P5 expressed the same thoughts regarding the passage of time as a means to recovery. However, they added that it is not always easy.

***Don't take it personal.*** This theme is tied with the theme make amends, apologize; it is related to interview question eight, with two occurrences (8%) being cited directly or indirectly by the interview participants. This theme focuses on limiting the emotional effects during recovery. For example, P12 shares her insight "I had to learn to detach from that emotionally; learn not to take things like that personally" (P12, personal communication, February 13, 2017). P14 offers her perspective "First I get upset, and then I get sad because usually if someone judges me on my authentic personality, it hurts. But then, I look at them, what is it that they are lacking where I am not lacking" (P14, personal communication, February 14, 2017).

***Make amends, apologize.*** This theme is tied with the theme don't take it personal, it is related to interview question eight, with two occurrences (8%) being cited directly or indirectly by the interview participants. This theme focuses on attempting to right a situation as part of recovery. For example, P8 states "I immediately try to make amends. Maybe I crossed a line or pushed someone too hard, I just try to resolve that as soon as I can" (P8, personal communication, February 6, 2017). P13 shares the same opinion.

**Summary of research question three.** Research question three sought to identify the strategies that successful women leaders employ to lead authentically. Two interview questions were designed to investigate the ways professional women leaders maintain their authenticity and the ways that professional women leaders recover after



experiencing a setback from being authentic. Eleven themes emerged from the two interview questions they are as follows: (a) being self-aware; (b) faith, prayer and reflection; (c) doing the right thing; (d) overcoming fear, having confidence; (e) being transparent; (f) seeking support from strong women and friends; (g) find my own path, move forward; (h) seek counsel and support from others; (i) it takes time; (j) don't take it personal; and (k) make amends, apologize.

The most significant strategies that successful women leaders employ to lead authentically are being self-aware and finding my own path. The theme of faith, prayer and reflection are also identified as significant because it was recorded as the second most significant strategy for both IQ7 and IQ8. The strategies are directly related to two interview questions and will be addressed individually.

The most significant finding related to IQ7 indicates at 27% that being self-aware is the best way to maintain authenticity in your leadership practice. The literature as it relates to the authentic leadership defines self-awareness as the degree of knowledge that a leader possesses of himself, including both the positive and negative attributes and the potential implications they pose to others (Kernis, 2003). It is the process of knowing and trusting who you are, and what you represent. It clarifies what a person values, how they are motivated, and the emotions, capabilities, strengths and weaknesses that help guide their behavior, life, and leadership style (Kernis, 2003). Self-aware people trust themselves, their abilities, and present themselves with an air of confidence and capability. Self-awareness according to Kernis (2003), is a contributing factor to an individual's psychological well-being.

P14 reflects her growth and self-awareness in the following:

I look back, and I go I wasn't myself back then. I didn't get to do this, I didn't get to do that and now I can. Because I can actually be authentic, I build the relationship that I want to build. I can look inward, and say I am doing the best I can and I can only get better (P14, personal communication, February 15, 2017).

The participants who identified being self-aware as the means for maintaining authenticity, commonly state that being authentic just comes naturally to them, because of their self-awareness.

The most significant finding related to IQ8 indicates at 31% that finding my own path is the strategy most used by the participants to recover from a setback as a result of being authentic. This theme represents the participant's conviction, will and courage to pull themselves up and continue moving forward despite a setback. The finding of faith, prayer and reflection is significant at 37% and was the second most significant strategy for both questions. This theme represents the participant's practices of relying on God, their faith and reflecting and mindful practices during times of personal setback. The literature review did not address this topic. Therefore, the finding is considered an unexpected finding that will be addressed later in the chapter.

#### **Research Question Four**

Research question four sought to identify how women leaders who lead with authenticity define success for themselves. Two interview questions were designed to investigate the research question; they are as follows:

IQ 9: At the end of the day, how do you define success for yourself?

IQ 10: What would constitute failure for you?

Themes related to the interview questions emerged from the interview transcripts during the data analysis process. These themes were then used to form the basis for answering research question three.

**Interview question nine.** At the end of the day, how do you define success for yourself? Thirty-two characteristics were identified as success factors for women leaders who lead with authenticity. From those 32 characteristics, six themes emerged. The six themes are presented in alphabetical order: (a) family and friends; (b) healthy, peaceful life; (c) helping others; (d) meaningful work, making an impact; (e) personal fulfillment and happiness; and (f) work and home life balance. Figure 19 represents in descending order the number of characteristics attributed to each of the six themes.

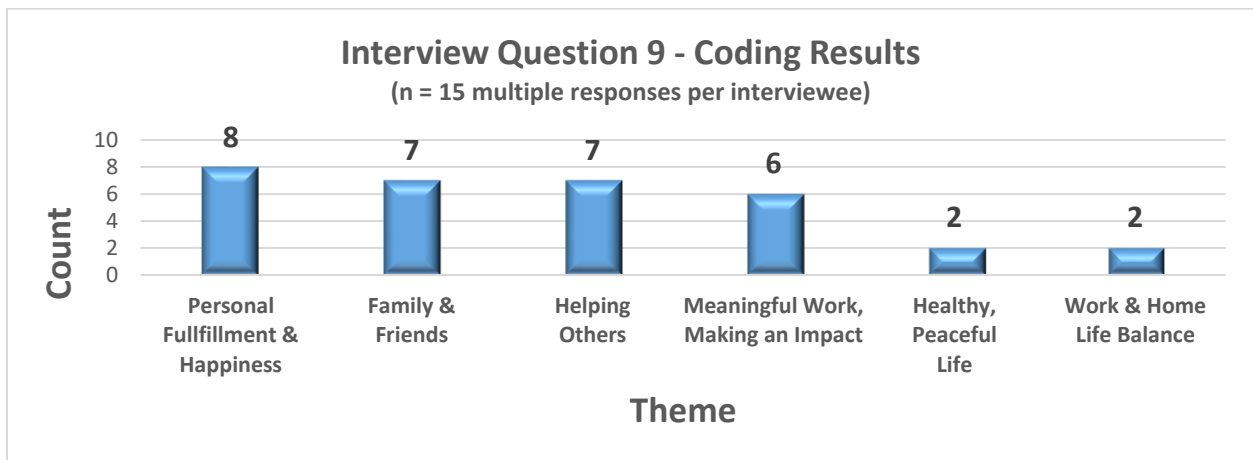


Figure 19. Ways that professional women leaders define success.

**Personal fulfillment and happiness.** The most prevalent theme related to interview question nine was personal fulfillment and happiness, with eight occurrences (25%) being cited directly or indirectly by the interview participants. This question as it relates to research question four identifies personal fulfillment and happiness as the

success factor for women leaders who lead with authenticity. For example, P7 defined success as:

When I have peace within myself and when I have peace with others then I know I have had success. I know I have been real, I have been true to myself, and I know I have been true to others (P7, personal communication, February 4, 2017).

A personal definition of success was offered by P8 “I define success by doing what I am meant to do, what I am gifted to do and feel really great about doing” (P8, personal communication, February 6, 2017). P3 added, “Success in my career, I became something that I never aspired to be” (P3, personal communication, January 29, 2017). A more common and universal message representing personal fulfillment and happiness was communicated by P2, P9, P10, P11 and P14. The messages referred to doing what makes me happy, feeling successful, and doing what I want to do.

***Family and friends.*** This theme is tied with the theme helping others as the second most prevalent theme related to interview question nine, with seven occurrences (22%) of it being cited directly or indirectly by the interview participants. This theme focuses on the success as it relates to having a strong family and circle of trusted friends. For example, P3 had this to say about being a mother and an ex-spouse:

Success as a mother, knowing that you have done well by your kids, and they have been done well by you. I think success for me too is my ex-husband and I

get along fine, we don't have any struggles with each other, like a lot of people (P3, personal communication, January 29, 2017).

Similarly, P14 contributed "Being able to see that my kids are successful and doing well at home, I have succeeded as a mother" (P14, personal communication, February 15, 2017). While P11 had this to say "I have been able to be with my family in CA while they were ill and my son, nieces, and nephew, I love being a part of that. It is important for me to be here, I value that" (P11, personal communication, February 11, 2017). Success with regard to family and relationship was also conveyed by P4, P5, P9, and P13.

***Helping others.*** This theme is tied with the theme family and friends as the second most prevalent theme related to interview question nine, with seven occurrences (22%) of it being cited directly or indirectly by the interview participants. This theme focuses on defining success in terms of serving others. For example, P8 defines success through helping others in these terms:

My calling is to inspire people to fully live out their unique gifts in the world. I feel successful every day when I have time to work with someone. Even if it is just one thing that I say or one tool that I give them, it changes something, and they are going to take action in a different way (P8, personal communications, February 6, 2017).

P12 defines success in a similar fashion "success for me is when clients reach their goals. When they realize their transformation, I see it; they realize it. That is very gratifying for me to literally see the change as they evolve and go through their journey"

(P12, personal communication, February 13, 2016). P1, P4, P6, P11, and P13 each identified helping or serving others as a success factor.

**Meaningful work.** This theme is related to interview question nine, with six occurrences (19%) of it being cited directly or indirectly by the interview participants. This theme focuses on defining success in terms of performing work that is meaningful to the individual. For example, P5 defines success as “my work has to have belief in it. It has to align with my values, right; I don’t know how to do that otherwise. I do want to make a difference. I want my work to mean something” (P5, personal communication, February 4, 2017). Similarly, P8 states “Success for me is having some type of purpose, feeling confident that I can achieve that purpose and having the freedom to go out and express my God-given gifts and talents in the world to actually achieve that” (P8, personal communication, February 6, 2017). Perhaps one of the more simple and yet profound definitions of impacting people was conveyed by P13 “Being a good person and making other people feel like they matter” (P13, personal communication, February 13, 2017). P9, P11, and P12 shared similar descriptions of success as it pertained to performing work that made a difference and had a positive impact on others.

**Healthy, peaceful life.** This theme is tied with the theme work and home life balance; it is related to interview question nine, with two occurrences (6%) of it being cited directly or indirectly by the interview participants. This theme focuses on defining success in terms of being in good health and living a satisfying lifestyle. For example, P12 defines success in these terms as follows:

A successful life lived for me is when I am 100 and am still fully active, and still taking care of myself. I will travel, we will be very active and very healthy and living the lifestyle that we [my husband and I] have created together by the ocean (P12, personal communication, February 13, 2017).

P5 conveys success in these terms as “I am looking for success as a balanced life, it’s time to take a walk, to meditate, and time to have healthy food” (P5, personal communication, February 4, 2017).

***Work and home life balance.*** This theme is tied with the theme healthy, peaceful life and is related to interview question nine, with two occurrences (6%) of it being cited directly or indirectly by the interview participants. This theme focuses on defining success in terms of maintaining a balance between the demands of both work and home life. For example, P15 describe success as “If I could have the perfect work and home life balance, to where I could do both, and not sacrifice one for the other (P15, personal communication, February 16, 2017).

**Interview question ten.** What would constitute failure for you? Twenty characteristics were identified as failure factors for women leaders who lead with authenticity. From those 20 characteristics, five themes emerged. The five themes are presented in alphabetical order: (a) career failure, job loss; (b) giving up; (c) not listening to self, following desires; (d) not successful in marriage or raising children; and (e) settling. Figure 20 represents in descending order the number of characteristics attributed to each of the six themes.

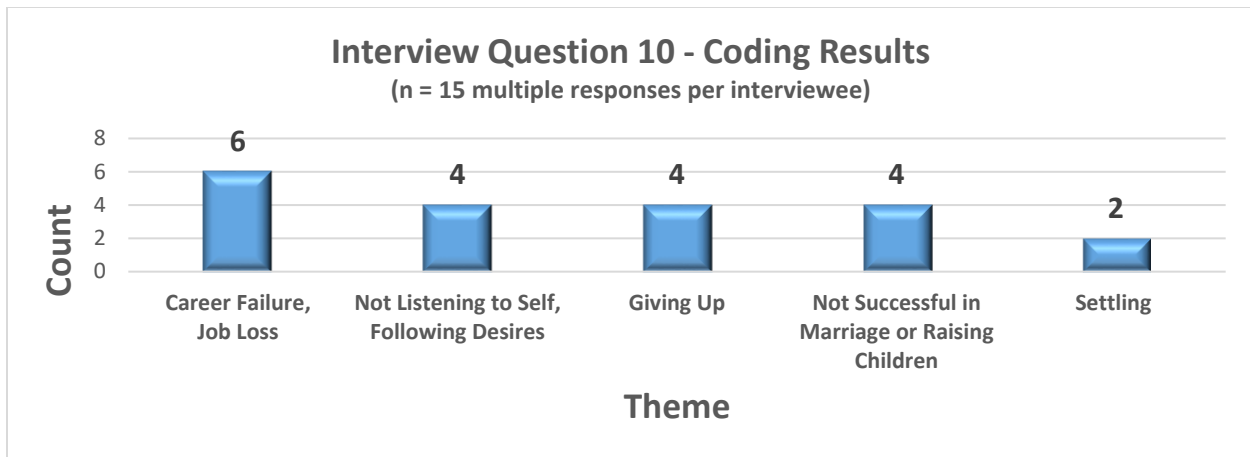


Figure 20. Ways that professional women leaders define failure.

**Career failure, job loss.** The most prevalent theme related to interview question one was career failure, job loss, with six occurrences (30%) being cited directly or indirectly by the interview participants. This question as it relates to research question four identifies the failure factors for women leaders who lead with authenticity. For example, P1 defined failure as it related to her recent job loss, she stated: “Oh God, for me, see right now, I still feel kind of like a failure from this job” (P1, personal communication, January 28, 2017). P5 had also recently experienced a job loss and had this to say “my experience was so painful for me. That was a failure for me, I really thought I could do it, and I really couldn’t” (P5, personal communications, February 4, 2017). Another job-related failure is expressed by P11:

I think failure is being a cog in the wheel with no big picture. Because career wise I like being the one that provides guidance for the bigger picture, if I am in a role where I am just sitting at a desk, I can do that, but I don’t love it (P11, personal communication, February 11, 2017).



P4, P6, and P12 associated their job failure to not completing tasks, not making a sale, or not helping clients achieve their goals.

***Not listening to self, following desires.*** This theme is tied with the two themes giving up and not successful in marriage or raising children; it is related to interview question ten, with four occurrences (20%) of it being cited directly or indirectly by the interview participants. This theme focuses on not following your natural instincts. For example, P7 stated:

Failure would be, if I did not fulfill or do what was in my gut that really makes me mad because sometimes you don't have a second chance, you've lost it. In those moments, I feel like I failed because I did not stay true to my intuition, my conscious, for whatever reason. When I follow other people's models (P7, personal communications, February 4, 2017).

P8 associates failure with regret "Not doing what is in my heart. Not following through with my desires. Ultimate failure, when I am old and gray and on my deathbed looking back with regret" (P8, personal communication, February 6, 2017). P5 relates failure with her inability to listen to herself when it matters most "Failure for me is not listening to myself. Not hearing myself and not creating enough space for me to hear myself" (P5, personal communications, February 4, 2017). P3 defined failure as "Not being able to do something that I really want to do. God gave us our unique set of gifts, and we are to use them to serve him. I take that to heart" (P3, personal communication, January 29, 2017).

***Giving up.*** This theme is tied with the two themes not listening to self, following desires and not successful in marriage or raising children; it is related to interview question ten, with four occurrences (20%) of it being cited directly or indirectly by the interview participants. This theme focuses on giving in and surrendering. For example, P9 stated:

Because I think if I did not give it my all, and I accepted excuses, then that is a failure. We only get this one life to live and making excuses or taking the easy way out would be a failure (P9, personal communication, February 7, 2017).

P10 shared the same opinion in her statement “Failure, I think, is if you know you did not try your hardest. If whatever you did, you did half-assed. Failure is, not trying” (P10, personal communication, February 10, 2017). P15 relates her failure to giving up on the attainment of work and home life balance. She expresses her thoughts as “I know that I want to do both (career and family) and giving up trying would be a failure because I have seen other people who have done it. I guess deciding that I have to pick one” (P15, personal communications, February 16, 2017). Lastly, P1 claims that failure is “Giving up or Giving In” (P1, personal communication, January 28, 2017).

***Not successful in marriage or raising children.*** This theme is tied with the two themes not listening to self, following desires and giving up; it is related to interview question ten, with four occurrences (20%) of it being cited directly or indirectly by the interview participants. This theme focuses on divorce and unsuccessful and neglectful child rearing. For example, P6 and P14 both relate failure to their unsuccessful marriages; they are cited as “I feel like I fail daily. Some of that comes from the failure of my marriages” and “I thought that ending my marriage was a failure. I did not make it

work” (P6, personal communication, February 4, 2017; P14, personal communication, February 15, 2017). P13 identifies failure as it relates to raising her children “Not being able to teach my kids good standards, and how to be a good person. I would consider myself a failure if I didn’t do a good job at that” (P13, personal communication, February 13, 2017). P4 identifies failure as “Not seeing my kids or getting a hug from my husband” (P4, personal communication, January 30, 2017).

**Settling.** This theme is related to interview question ten, with two occurrences (120%) being cited directly or indirectly by the interview participants. This theme focuses on settling for something less than what one had hoped to attain. For example, P2 states “Failure is settling, You go to work every day because you get paid 100K a year, but you hate it, to me that is failure” (P2, personal communication, January 28, 2017). Also, cited is a comment from P11 “To be stuck in a position either personally or professionally where you are not learning and growing and having a positive effect on other people, that to me is failure” (P11, personal communication, February 11, 2017).

**Summary of research question four.** Research question four sought to identify how women leaders who lead with authenticity define success for themselves. Two interview questions were designed to identify how successful women leaders define success and failure. Eleven themes emerged from the two interview questions they are as follows: (a) personal fulfillment and happiness; (b) family and friends; (c) helping others; (d) meaning work, making an impact; (e) healthy, peaceful life; (f) work and home life balance; (g) career failure, job loss; (h) not listening to self, following desires; (i) giving up; (j) not successful in marriage or raising children; and (k) settling.

The most significant factors for success identified by women leaders are personal fulfillment and happiness, family and friends, helping others and career. The success factors are directly related to two interview questions and will be addressed individually. The most significant finding related to IQ9 indicates at 25% that personal fulfillment and happiness is the most important element when defining success for women leaders, with family and friends and helping others tied for second. The themes are consistent with the literature. In a survey conducted by *Working Women* magazine, 79% of the sample chose family life and relationship (Kagan, 1993 as cited in Dyke, 2006). A more comprehensive study involving semi-structured, face to face interviews determined that women value relationship as a major contributor to success (Dyke & Murphy, 2006). The most significant finding related to IQ10 indicates at 30% that career failure, job loss as the most important element when defining failure for successful women leaders. For example, P6 stated that “I feel like if I didn’t make a sale, I feel like I failed” and P1 who believes that she is a failure because she recently lost her job “I still feel kind of like a failure from this job.”

### **Research Question Five**

Research question five sought to explore the importance of leading authentically for aspiring women leaders. Two interview questions were designed to investigate the research question; they are as follows:

IQ 11: Reflecting on your leadership journey, what would you do differently with regard to being authentic?

IQ 12: How important is it for aspiring women leaders to act authentically?

Themes related to the interview questions emerged from the interview transcripts during the data analysis process. These themes were then used to form the basis for answering research question one.

**Interview question eleven.** Reflecting on your leadership journey, what would you do differently with regard to being authentic? Twenty-five characteristics were identified as things that professional women leaders would do differently on their leadership journey with regard to being authentic. From those 25 characteristics, six themes emerged. The six themes are presented in alphabetical order: (a) been more confident; (b) embraced authenticity earlier in life/career; (c) faced my fears; (d) had a mentor; (e) made adjustments; and (f) pursued self-improvement. Figure 21 represents in descending order the number of characteristics attributed to each of the seven themes.

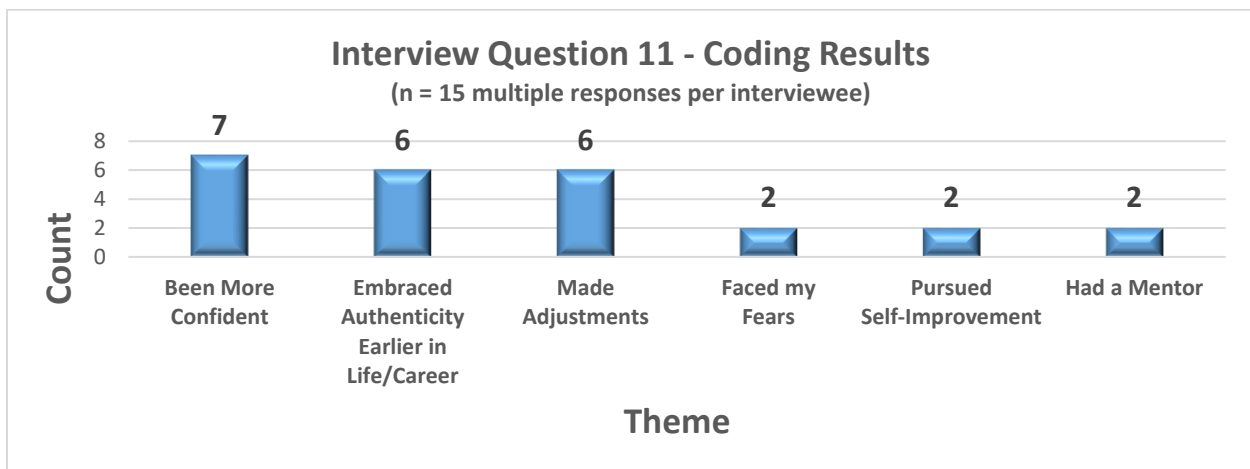


Figure 21. Things that professional women leaders would do differently on their leadership journey with regard to being authentic.

**Been more confident.** The most prevalent theme related to interview question eleven was been more confident, with seven occurrences (28%) being cited directly or indirectly by the interview participants. This question as it relates to research question

number five would recommend being more confident to aspiring women leaders. P2 communicated her position as “I think the main thing is just being really confident in what I am doing and who I am” (P2, personal communication, January 28, 2017). P11 reflected on her early career stating “I think that in the beginning, I think I would have worried less of what other people think and just tried to be myself” (P11, personal communication, February 11, 2017). P14 shared a hard learned lesson explaining “I wouldn’t let anyone else define me, I’d learn how to stand up for myself” (P14, personal communication, February 15, 2017). While P10 added “Being yourself will make you feel comfortable and then confident. You can’t copy others; you have to be yourself” (P10, personal communication, February 10, 2017). P1, P6, and P9 admitted that things they would do differently as it relates to being authentic would be to maintain their identity, not apologize for it and to always keep things in perspective.

***Embraced authenticity earlier in life/career.*** This theme is tied with the theme made adjustments, as the second most prevalent theme, it is related to interview question eleven, with six occurrences (24%) being cited directly or indirectly by the interview participants. This theme focuses on a desire to have exhibited authenticity earlier in their leadership experiences. For example, P15 admits “Probably not being authentic earlier in my career and not being authentic initially and then me making the switch and deciding screw this” (P15, personal communication, February 16, 2017). P10 shared the same thoughts by stating “I think I would have started being authentic at a younger age” (P10, personal communication, February 10, 2017). P11 elaborates by sharing the following:

I think that in the beginning, I would have worried less of what other people think and just tried to be myself. I think as women especially, we are taught to do for everyone, not ourselves, not that I don't like to give, I love to give to my family, but we have to take care of ourselves too (P11, personal communication, February 11, 2017).

P8, P9, and P13 also communicated their regret in not displaying authenticity earlier in their careers.

***Make adjustments.*** This theme is tied with the theme embraced authenticity earlier in life/career, as the second most prevalent theme, it is related to interview question eleven, with six occurrences (24%) being cited directly or indirectly by the interview participants. This theme focuses on a desire for participants to have made adjustments in their demeanor or behavior. For example, P5 admits that "I think I am too direct for a woman, or maybe just too direct for a professional. I continue to work on being less direct" (P5, personal communication, February 4, 2017). P14 adds "Looking back I would definitely have learned to use my voice, Nobody will know your opinion if you do not speak it" (P14, personal communication, February 14, 2107). P7 speaks to the benefit of maturity in the following statement:

Maturity comes when you can be real, but in a way that is presentable. It takes a lot of maturity, it takes a lot of language skills, a lot of emotion to do that. So, I am learning to do that, where I am not reacting, but being more responsible. So, I am learning the difference between being raw and real and how to be real but not so raw (P7, personal communication, February 4, 2017).

P4 speaks to the benefit of concealing her emotions by adding “I would learn to hide my thoughts from my face earlier in life” (P4, personal communication, January 30, 2017).

Comparable comments were expressed by P6 and P13.

***Faced my fears.*** This theme is tied with two themes; pursued self-improvement and had a mentor, they are related to interview question eleven, with two occurrences (8%) being cited directly or indirectly by the interview participants. This theme focuses on an individual’s ability to accept and confront their fears. For example, P2 shares her thought regarding fear in the following statement:

I think, what I would do differently is to eliminate the fear, because I think that is what has held me back in the past with regard to being authentic. And I think just being more confident, and being more transparent with my colleagues and not worrying about if I say this, it is going to get me fired (P2, personal communication, January 28, 2017).

P11 also states that she wished “I had not been afraid, to tell the truth about situations and not just to try to gloss it over, pet the dog so to speak. Just being able to tell it like it is” (P11, personal communication, February 11, 2017).

***Pursued self-improvement.*** This theme is tied with two themes; faced my fears and had a mentor, they are related to interview question eleven, with two occurrences (8%) being cited directly or indirectly by the interview participants. This theme focuses on an individual taking the initiative to advance her learning and abilities. For example, P4 reflected on her retrospection:



I would have made sure I understand the difference between managing and leading. Made sure I read more leadership books, or just had positive thinking books like Zig Ziglar and Tony Robins and getting a better mindset. I wish I had done that earlier in my career (P4, personal communication, January 30, 2017).

P10 shares how:

You can't copy others; you have to be yourself. Nobody is alike; I mean you read books and get the best practices from other people, but you have to be yourself and understand how to use those practices with my own self and in my own way (P10, personal communication, February 10, 2017).

***Had a mentor.*** This theme is tied with two themes; faced my fears and pursued self-improvement, they are related to interview question eleven, with two occurrences (8%) being cited directly or indirectly by the interview participants. This theme focuses on an individual pursuing a mentoring relationship in order facilitate relational learning. For example, P12 reflecting on what she would have done differently with respect to her leadership journey states "I wish had been exposed to more women like me, If I had more of that exposure (and mentorship), that would be one thing that I would change if I could have" (P12, personal communication, February 13, 2017). P4 also shared "I would get a mentor from each company I work for. Change mentors as I progress" (P4, personal communication, January 30, 2017).

**Interview question twelve.** How important is it for aspiring women leaders to act authentically? Twenty-three characteristics were identified as suggestions for aspiring women leaders to embrace authenticity in their leadership practice. From those 23

characteristics, five themes emerged. The five themes are presented in alphabetical order: (a) be a leader of self, self-awareness, build your confidence; (b) don't be afraid to stand up and be yourself; (c) find your passion; (d) get and be a mentor; and (e) never stop learning. Figure 22 represents in descending order the number of characteristics attributed to each of the seven themes.

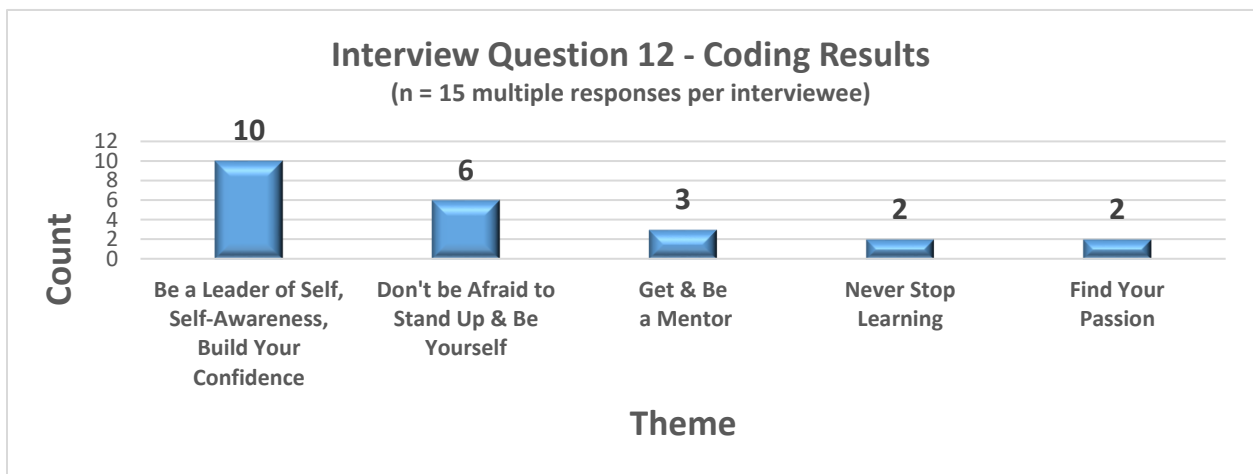


Figure 22. Suggestions for aspiring women leaders to embrace authenticity in their leadership practice.

***Be a leader of self, self-awareness, build your confidence.*** The most prevalent theme related to interview question twelve was be a leader of self, self-awareness, build your confidence, with 10 occurrences (43%) being cited directly or indirectly by the interview participants. This question as it relates to research question number five would recommend being a leader of self, self-awareness, build your confidence to aspiring women leaders. P8 suggests that:

To be a good leader you have to be a good leader of yourself, when we are young we want to make a good impression, and we try to please our parents that is what we are conditioned to do. That does not always lend itself to showing

your true self and being authentic. Taking time to pay attention to the lessons you've learned, as a female executive or leader you have to take time for yourself to keep yourself grounded in who you are so you can feed that in you, so you can be rejuvenated and refreshed (P8, personal communication, February 6, 2017).

With respect to being a leader of self P13 offers the following advice:

I would say that it is extremely important to be authentic and the sooner you can start being authentic the sooner you are going to be comfortable with yourself and be able to succeed more. Reflect about your day, think about the way that you behaved, the things that you said and the effect that you had on people and how others have affected you. Also, think about how much you should let other people affect you (P13, personal communication, February 13, 2017).

With respect to self-awareness P12 stresses that:

First, you need to get in touch with who you really are and realizing and focusing on your strengths. Because if you focus on your strengths, you will build those strengths. If you don't like yourself, you can't present yourself in a positive fashion to others. You're are not going to exude confidence. You want to feel comfortable in your own skin. Really understanding your sense of self is going to make all the difference in the world to you, not only personally but professionally (P12, personal communication, February 13, 2017).

Brief and impactful suggestions were proposed by P2, P7, P8, and P12 "I think confidence is really important, because that is one of the main reasons that women are

held back from being authentic”, “Find your passion and that passion is going to find that leader in you, in whatever mode or field that is”, “It is important to be self-aware and understanding what you need to do to be a leader of yourself”, and “Only think positive about that on your path and that will allow the universe to bring that to you” (P2, personal communication, January 28, 2017; P7, personal communication, February 4, 2017; P8, personal communication, February 6, 2017; P12, personal communication, February 13, 2017). Similar suggestions were offered by P5, P6, and P9.

***Don't be afraid to stand up and be yourself.*** This theme is the second most prevalent theme related to interview question twelve, with four occurrences (14%) of it being cited directly or indirectly by the interview participants. This theme focuses on an individual's ability to be bold and to speak your voice. For example, P9 communicates her thoughts regarding the advantages of being a female leader and how we should set a better example:

We have so much to offer, from perspective to emotion, to guidance, to support and we owe it both to ourselves and to our fellow women to be ok with that and stand for something. As a women leader, we need to set a better example and not apologize for ourselves (P9, personal communication, February 7, 2017).

P14 offers additional words of encouragement:

Speak your mind, use your voice, and don't let anyone try to silence you when you have something to say. It is important to be comfortable in your own skin and to be able to stand your ground. Use your voice, and don't let someone convince you that you are wrong when you think you are right. Don't let anyone

make you feel bad about yourself (P14, personal communications, February 15, 2017).

The importance of staying strong when being opposed is communicated by P6 “Be confident in what you stand for and when you are challenged, hold on to your resolve. Stand by your beliefs. Women need to be encouraged not to be fearful of those that are going to oppose them (P6, personal communication, February 4, 2017). P1 and P2 share similar thoughts on being real and not being fearful. However, P10 perhaps has the most compelling suggestion for aspiring women leaders “Be yourself, stand up for what you believe in, create your own version of a leader” (P10, personal communication, February 10, 2017).

***Get and be a mentor.*** This theme is related to interview question twelve, with three occurrences (13%) of it being cited directly or indirectly by the interview participants. This theme focuses on an individual participating in a mentoring relationship to improve their leadership skills. For example, P4 and P12 suggest that you “Get a mentor or a coach, especially if you want to aspire to higher, find out what you need to know and what you need to learn” and “Make sure that you have an active mentorship program” (P4, personal communication, January 30, 2017; P12, personal communication, February 13, 2017). Perhaps the most authentic and selfless piece of advice comes from P3 “Do whatever you can do to help other people get to where they need to go. If what you have done in life has helped you then maybe somebody else can benefit from your story” (P3, personal communication, January 29, 2017).

***Never stop learning.*** This theme is tied with the theme find your passion; it is related to interview question twelve, with two occurrences (9%) being cited directly or indirectly by the interview participants. This theme focuses on the idea of being a lifelong learner, always pursuing knowledge. P13 suggests that there is value in learning and reflecting on your actions; she states “I think the more you can learn from your actions the better chance you have to improve and not repeat the error” (P13, personal communication, February 13, 2017). While P4 suggests that seeking out and learning from others is important “Keep learning, go to professional associations and meet up with groups in your area” (P4, personal communication, January 30, 2017).

***Find your passion.*** This theme is tied with the theme never stop learning; it is related to interview question twelve, with two occurrences (9%) being cited directly or indirectly by the interview participants. This theme focuses on the relentless pursuit of the work or accomplishment that will bring you true happiness. P11 reiterates “Being yourself and doing what you love, and not worrying so much about what other people think” (P11, personal communication, February 11, 2017). The best advice for aspiring leaders today is to try and get it right the first time. P7 shares experiences with some of her coaching clients:

I think that if they tap into their passion that is going to lead them to influence other people. There are people all around who have not tapped into their passions, and the sad story is, especially with my aging students, they realized in their middle 30’s that even though they are making lots of money and look so successful, they hate where they are, and then they have to redo life again. So, that is something that I don’t want them to experience; I want to give them the

freedom to find what they are passionate about now and to foster that in a way that you can achieve it. Because, once you realize what you are passionate about, you are going to be really good at it, and you are representing who you really are and being true. That is the abundant life, John 10:10. That is what God has come to give us, where we have all failed is where we make life just routine. Find your passion and that passion is going to find that leader in you (P7, personal communication, February 4, 2017).

**Summary of research question five.** Research question five sought to explore the importance of leading authentically for aspiring women leaders. Two interview questions were designed to identify things that professional women leaders would do differently on their leadership journey with regard to being authentic and suggestions for aspiring women leaders to embrace authenticity in their leadership practice. Eleven themes emerged from the two interview questions they are as follows: (a) been more confident; (b) embraced authenticity earlier in life/career; (c) made adjustments; (d) self-awareness, build your confidence; (h) don't be afraid to stand up and be yourself; (i) get and be a mentor; (j) never stop learning; and (k) find your passion.

The most significant recommendations that successful women leaders offer aspiring women leaders are (a) embrace authenticity earlier in life/career; (b) make adjustments; (c) leader of self, improve self-awareness, build confidence; (d) face your fears, don't be afraid to stand up for yourself; and (e) get and be a mentor. The recommendations are directly related to two interview questions and will be addressed individually. The most significant finding related to IQ11 indicates at 24% that being able to embrace authenticity earlier in life/career is the best way to start accepting who

you are and demonstrating that early in life. Also significant at 24% is learning to make necessary adjustments, this finding was previously discussed in research question two. The next three findings related to both IQ10 and IQ11. Become a leader of self, improve self-awareness, and build confidence was identified by participants at 57%. This finding relates to an individual's ability to intimately know oneself and to boost their confidence to defend their values and what they represent. This importance of understanding is communicated by P8 "It is important to be self-aware and understanding what you need to do to be a leader of yourself." The literature suggests that to meet expectations of the conventional leader, women may attempt to approach leadership with an approach that is unnatural for them (Baker, 2014; Broughton & Miller, 2009). The emotional effort it takes to sustain this behavior eventually takes its toll in the form of doubt and low self-confidence (Eagly, 2005). Presenting yet another disadvantage since leaders are expected to present themselves with confidence if they are to influence others successfully and to continue to advance in their leadership positions (Eagly, 2005).

The next most significant finding was identified by participants at 27% and was face your fears, don't be afraid to stand up, be yourself. This finding is related to the courage that it takes to take a stand for what you believe. The last most significant finding was identified by participants at 17% and was get and be a mentor. This finding is related to the benefits gained by individuals who engage in relationships with other successful leaders to expand their knowledge while advancing their career development.



## Chapter Summary

The purpose of this descriptive phenomenological study was to examine and learn from the leadership experiences of successful women leaders across multiple generations. Fifteen women leaders who were active members of the NAPW, South Orange County Chapter, with at least a Bachelors level of education, and a minimum of 10 years working experience were recruited to participate in the study. Twelve interview questions were designed to answer the following five research questions:

1. How does leading with authenticity contribute to women leaders' career success?
2. What barriers and challenges do successful women leaders face in leading with authenticity?
3. What strategies do successful women leaders employ to lead authentically?
4. How do women leaders who lead with authenticity define success for themselves?
5. Would successful women leaders recommend being authentic to aspiring women leaders?

Data collection was conducted using audio recorded semi-structured interviews. The data analysis and interrater reliability were accomplished in collaboration with two Pepperdine University, doctoral candidates. Content from the transcribed interviews was analyzed and coded according to the process outlined in Chapter three. The findings of the study revealed a composite of 286 characteristics assigned to 64 themes that aligned to the 12 interview questions. A graphic representation was included for each of the 12 questions, depicting in descending order the number of characteristics

attributed to each of the themes for that question. Presentation of key findings, common themes, implications, recommendations, conclusions and final researcher thoughts are included in Chapter five.

## **Chapter Five: Conclusion and Recommendations**

Women who have chosen to accept leadership positions have faced a multitude of challenges and have experienced varying degrees of hardship and discrimination. As a result, they struggle to implement their leadership strategies and to influence effectively. In their efforts to succeed, women are compelled to adapt their behavior to meet expectations, often at the expense of compromising their identity and what they stand for (Eagly, 2005).

This study explored authentic leadership as it relates to successful women leaders, and contributes to the literature in the field of leadership, gender and culture. It served to provide insight and knowledge based on the life experiences of 15 successful women leaders. The results provide a basis to create a very specific learning curriculum to help instill confidence, encouragement, and support for aspiring women leaders. The instructional materials may also serve to assist professional coaches while offering opportunities for consultants to advance the practice of authenticity.

This chapter presents the conclusions and recommendations of the study. A brief summary of the study is presented, followed by the findings and implications. Recommendations are offered, along with the study conclusion and the researcher's final thoughts.

### **Summary of the Study**

The study sought to investigate the practice of authenticity among successful woman leaders. A review of the relevant literature was used to inform the development

of five research questions. Twelve interview questions were used to guide the collection of data for the study.

A descriptive qualitative research design was used, applying a phenomenological method of inquiry. Qualitative research seeks to determine the meaning that people attribute to the subject matter. The phenomenological methodology attempts to describe the lived experiences of the participants, to ascertain the “essence” or common theme of everyone who has encountered the same phenomenon (Creswell 2013; Moustakas, 1994; van Manen, 1990).

For the purpose of this study professional women leaders are defined as women who have obtained a level of education at the bachelor level or above and has over ten years of working experience. A formal leadership role was not required. Purposive sampling was used to intentionally target 15 women leaders who are members of a professional leadership association. In this situation, the subjects are sure to have experienced the phenomenon to be studied and are capable of describing the most relevant and critical aspects of their experience (Creswell, 1998). Purposive sampling was also used to achieve maximum variation, so that each participant’s experience while similar, provided a degree of exclusivity that would contribute to the essence of the phenomenon (Lincoln & Guba, 1985). Maximum variation was achieved by selecting members with diverse industries, age groups, and cultures.

Semi-structured interviews were used as the method of data collection; this offered a highly personal and efficient form of research. The study included peer review validity to ensure that the interview questions were aligned to the research questions

and that the wording of the questions returned the response intended (Creswell, 2013). Two of Pepperdine University's doctoral students served as the peer reviewers.

To become more familiar with the data the researcher manually transcribed the audio files gathered from the semi-structured interviews. The transcripts were then analyzed to identify keywords and significant statements. Clusters of meaning were derived from the statements allowing for the emergence of related themes. The coding methodology achieved high inter-rater reliability again with the help of two peer reviewers from Pepperdine University, doctoral students. Visual representations of the findings were developed to help make sense of the data compiled during the study. The final research package was carefully crafted to communicate the story behind the study.

### **The findings**

The findings are intended to assist current and aspiring women leaders in addressing and overcoming the challenges of demonstrating authenticity in their leadership practice. This chapter presents the findings of the study and attempts to determine and report if the findings:

- 1.) Support the research questions
- 2.) Align to the research contained in the literature review, and whether it is supported or not
- 3.) Contribute to or extend any previous research
- 4.) Solve or bring clarity to any contradictions in the literature review
- 5.) Expose any unusual results

Table 3 below lists the 20 most common themes that were derived from the study and the percentage of the participant responses that identified with that theme. The type of data retrieved for that research question is also provided.

Table 3

*Twenty Most Common Themes*

THEME		Type of Data Retrieved	Research Question
Being True to Self, Genuine*	67%	Contribution	RQ1
Feels Better, Honors Personal Values*	33%		RQ1
Improves Relationships*	27%		RQ1
Increases Performance	14%		RQ1
Maintaining Consistency Between Professional & Personal Lives	42%	Barriers/Challenges	RQ2
Finds it Difficult	33%		RQ2
Being True to Self, Genuine	29%		RQ2
Cost Me My Job	38%		RQ2
Being Self-Aware	27%	Strategies	RQ3
Mind My Own Path, Move Forward	31%		RQ3
Faith, Prayer, and Reflection*	37%		RQ3
Personal Fulfillment & Happiness	25%	Success	RQ4
Family & Friends	22%		RQ4
Helping Others	22%		RQ4
Career	30%		RQ4
Embrace Authenticity Earlier in Life/Career	24%	Recommendations	RQ5
Make Adjustments	24%		RQ5

(continued)

THEME		Type of Data Retrieved	Research Question
Leader of Self, Improve Self-Awareness, Build Confidence*	57%		RQ5
Face your Fears, Don't be Afraid to Stand Up, Be Yourself*	27%		RQ5
Get & Be a Mentor *	17%		RQ5

\*Combined Theme

**Results for research question one.** Research question one asked. How does leading with authenticity contribute to women leaders' career success? To answer this question, two interview questions focused on the importance of authenticity in both a professional and personal setting. Participants provided details as to why authenticity was important to them in both of these settings. These questions are important because:

1. In a professional setting, leaders are assessed on their ability to influence others to achieve a specific goal (Rowe & Guerrero, 2011). Individual characteristics, corporate culture, and the work environment are important factors as it relates to influence because they can positively and negatively affect a leader's ability to influence others. Leaders with high integrity and a commitment to deeply held principles instill a sense of trust that followers aspire to and look for in their leaders. George (2003) describes this type of leader as an authentic leader.
2. In a personal setting, women leaders are typically assessed on their ability to create and maintain a network of relationships in various environments. These environments are dependent upon a multitude of roles that women

leaders assume in their personal life (i.e. wife, mother, sister, daughter, church leader). The notion of influencing others remains just as relevant in a personal setting as it does in the professional one

**Analysis of research question one.** The two interview questions yielded a total of 52 characteristics from the transcript data. From these characteristics, nine unique themes emerged. The top four themes included: (a) being true to self, genuine; (b) feels better, honors personal values; (c) improves relationships (family, friends, colleagues); and (d) increases performance. The percentage of the participant responses identified to these themes answering the question(s) are depicted below (See Table 4). Also listed in the table is a category that describes the type of data this question retrieved. For this research question, each of the characteristics and themes contributes to the career success of women leaders. Therefore, the findings support the research question.

Table 4

*RQ1 - Research Question One*

RQ1 - How does leading with authenticity contribute to women leaders' career success?	Contribution
IQ1: As a woman, professionally, how important do you see the role of authenticity in your leadership practice?	
IQ2: How about personally?	
COMMON THEMES	
Being True to Self, Genuine*	67%
Feels Better, Honors Personal Values*	33%
Improves Relationships (Family, Friends, Colleagues)*	27%
Increases Performance	14%
* Combined Theme	



The results of the study are consistent with the literature and indicate that women leaders attribute being true to themselves and honoring their personal values and beliefs as a means to portray a sense of genuineness to others as the most important contribution toward leadership success (Kernis, 2003). Accomplishing this leads to a demonstration of transparency and vulnerability that exposes themselves to others as being relatable and human (Goleman, 1998). As relationships develop and improve, the leader establishes a higher degree of trust and respect with their followers. Resulting in followers holding their leaders in a higher regard, whereby, they trust in, and expect more from them (Hall et al., 2004). These expectations lead to more ethical decision making by the leader, and a higher awareness of how leader actions and display of consistent behavior are perceived by others. The overall impact of the behavior on both leader and follower results in increased commitment and desire to do a good job; bringing about higher performance levels by both parties (Hall et al., 2004). The participant accounts and descriptions of their experiences relating to the importance of authenticity in both their professional and personal life identified four significant contributions to the success of women leaders.

- Enables you to be true to self
- Makes you feel better because you are honoring your personal values
- Improves relationships with colleagues, friends, and family
- Increases performance

**Results for research question two.** Research question two asked. What barriers and challenges do successful women leaders face in leading with authenticity? In an effort to answer this question, four interview questions focused on: (a) reconciling

the differences of authenticity in both the professional and personal life; (b) identifying the difficulty of displaying authenticity; (c) recalling the obstacles that authenticity has had on being a successful woman leader, and (d) identifying any regret experienced from being authentic. These questions are important because the integration of women into the leadership pipeline requires a clear understanding of the challenges women face in the context of identity, work-life, family life, and leadership development. Women leaders have difficulty synthesizing these dimensions into a cohesive image of self (Bierema, 2016). Deeply held gender roles in society and the masculine stereotyping of the “ideal worker” that places career above family, health and personal life further complicate this undertaking (Reid, 2015)

**Analysis of research question two.** The four interview questions yielded a total of 82 characteristics identified from the transcript data. From these characteristics, 19 unique themes emerged. The top four themes included: (a) maintaining consistency between professional and personal lives; (b) finds it difficult; (c) being true to self, genuine; and (d) cost me my job. The percentage of the participant responses identified to these themes answering the question(s) are depicted below (See Table 5). Also listed in the table is a category that describes the type of data this question retrieved. For this question, each of the characteristics and themes contributes to the understanding of the barriers and challenges that successful women leaders face while leading with authenticity. Therefore, the findings support the research question.

Table 5

*RQ2 - Research Question Two*

RQ2 - What barriers and challenges do successful women leaders face in leading with authenticity?	Barriers/Challenges
IQ3: If these perceived importances are different, how do you reconcile the difference?	
IQ4: How difficult is it for you to be authentic as a leader?	
IQ5: Has leading with authenticity ever become an obstacle to your success as a leader?	
IQ6: Have you ever regretted being authentic? What were the circumstances?	
COMMON THEMES	
Maintaining Consistency Between Professional & Personal Lives	42%
Finds it Difficult	33%
Being True to Self, Genuine	29%
Cost Me My Job	38%

The results of the study indicate that successful women leaders find leading with authenticity difficult, especially in their ability to be true to themselves while attempting to meet the socialized expectations of their gender and leadership roles (Eagly & Karau, 2002). However, a significant outcome suggests that while authenticity may be difficult in leading, it is not necessary for women to reconcile authenticity within themselves, both professionally and personally. Indicating that many successful women leaders understand who they are and what they represent regardless of their environment. These results contribute to the existing literature and are substantiated by the number of occurrences participants attributed to the theme maintain consistency between their professional and personal lives.

Women leaders recognize that to be a successful leader in today's environment that they may need to make adjustments in their behavior to meet a management expectation of what a leader should be in a particular workplace culture. Especially as it relates to gender and the masculine stereotype that is commonly associated with a leadership role. For many, this poses a significant challenge, because the degree of adjustment or adaptation needed, causes them to feel like they are compromising their authenticity and therefore not honoring their values and beliefs. Potentially providing the reason that some women leaders choose to maintain separate images of themselves in their professional and personal life.

For others, leading with authenticity just comes naturally, and perhaps they have found a career and work environment that enables them to do that without much of a challenge. A few noted it is easier for them to be authentic than not. Finally, a common assumption was that authenticity is something that is developed over time, through life experiences and the realization of what is important in life and what makes you happy as a person.

On regret, the commitment that women leaders have to honor their values and personal beliefs have sometimes resulted in either a loss of a job or a situation where they felt they needed to leave. This experience is extremely personal, and for many, they regret that standing up for themselves and what they stand for, cost them their job, however, they did not regret doing it. For others, regret came from knowing that they adjusted their behavior at work instead of defending themselves, and honoring their values and personal beliefs. Other forms of regret from being authentic resulted in the

outcomes that either made them feel threatened, betrayed or perceived as being weak by others.

The researcher after reviewing both the findings and the literature determined that the study findings are consistent with the literature with regard to maintaining a consistent image, experiencing difficulty and overcoming obstacles. However, the researcher found that investigating a woman's regret for being authentic contributes to previous research. The findings from this study indicate that women are willing to compromise their job to remain authentic. The participant accounts and descriptions of their experiences with authenticity resulted in the identification of three significant barriers/challenges that successful women leaders face leading authentically.

- Ability to practice authenticity
- Ability to be true to self
- Ability to maintain employment

**Results for research question three.** Research question three asked. What strategies do successful women leaders employ to lead authentically? To answer this question, two interview questions focused on the strategies women leaders use to maintain authenticity and recover from setbacks caused by being authentic. Participants provided the strategies they use to address both of these situations. These questions are important because:

1. Authentic leaders must maintain excellent character and virtue if they are to lead effectively. A leader's reputation and the degree of trust afforded to the leader depends on it. Excellent character requires a high degree of internal moral perspective, an attribute that represents a leader's ability to exert high

levels of self-regulation and self-control. It involves establishing standards, identifying discrepancies and proposing appropriate action for remediation. It is the process that authentic leaders use to ensure that their values, intentions, behavior and action all line up (Stajkovic & Luthans, 1998).

2. Authentic leaders must possess personality traits that enable them to operate as their own social force, immune to situational and environmental influences that could negatively affect their behaviors. They must be led by the internal forces that originate from their personality and deeply held beliefs (Tett & Burnett, 2003).

**Analysis of research question three.** The two interview questions yielded a total of 52 characteristics from the transcript data. From these characteristics, ten unique themes emerged. The top three themes included: (a) being self-aware; (b) find my own path; and (c) faith, prayer, and reflection. The percentage of the participant responses identified to these themes answering the question(s) are depicted below (See Table 6). Also listed in the table is a category that describes the type of data this question retrieved. For this research question, each of the characteristics and themes contributes to the strategies that women use to maintain and recover from setback caused by being authentic. Therefore, the findings support the research question.

Table 6

*RQ3 - Research Question Three*

RQ3 - What strategies do successful women leaders employ to lead authentically?	Strategies
IQ7: How do you maintain your authenticity as a leader?	
IQ8: If you ever have a setback from being authentic, how do you recover?	

(continued)

COMMON THEMES	
Being Self-Aware	27%
Being Self-Aware	27%
Find My Own Path, Move Forward	31%
Faith, Prayer & Reflection*	37%
* Combined Theme	

The results of the study indicate that having a connection with God, leaning on their faith and practicing reflective and mindfulness exercises as the most common strategy used by successful women leaders to recover from a setback caused by leading with authenticity. Faith coupled with self-awareness help to guide these women down their path. They apply their sense of self-awareness to understand their strengths and to work within that space. They also recognize their shortcomings and seek guidance from God, their faith and reflective time, while also seeking assistance from people they trust and respect. Seeking the assistance from others is addressed and consistent with the literature as it relates to leadership development programs. Leadership development programs specifically designed for women emphasize the transformational leadership styles that are more naturally demonstrated by women than men. More importantly, these programs provide a safe environment for women to have a discourse about the challenges they face regarding the double-bind problem of trying to simultaneously satisfy both the female gender role and the male stereotype of leadership (Debebe et al., 2016).

Using moral and ethical judgment serves as a set of bookends from which successful leaders determine their behavior and actions. Addressing fears and confidence issues are common, while also allowing time to be vulnerable without being emotional. Recognizing that some recovery only happens through the passage of time and potentially making a situation right by apologizing or making amends. The participant accounts and descriptions of their experiences with authenticity resulted in the identification of three significant strategies that successful women leaders employ to lead authentically

- Being self-aware
- Finding my own path
- Faith, prayer, and reflection

**Results for research question four.** Research question four asked. How do women leaders who lead with authenticity define success for themselves? To answer this question, two interview questions focused on the identification of success and failure factors. Participants provided the factors that address both of these situations. These questions are important because:

1. Success is a subjective state and is different for each. However, common themes across groups can be identified. The literature defines success as a state of measurement that each judge about their accomplishment, as compared to their personal criteria (Ng & Feldman, 2014, Park, 2010).
2. Women value relationships, therefore, it is no surprise that they associate success from an intrinsic perspective. Women regard achievement of personal goals as the number one determinant of success, followed by



recognition and enjoyment of the work they perform (Northcutt, 1991). For women, self-fulfillment is a common theme (Hardesty & Jacobs, 1986).

Studies from the literature suggest that women, as the usual caregiver, naturally embraces a more communal leadership style identifying the elements of relationship and work-life balance as success factors. Men, as the head of household, take on the agentic leadership style, identifying monetary and material reward as success factors (Dann, 1995; Dyke & Murphy, 2006).

**Analysis of research question four.** The two interview questions yielded a total of 52 characteristics from the transcript data. From these characteristics, 11 unique themes emerged. The top four themes included: (a) personal fulfillment and happiness; (b) family and friends; (c) helping others; and (d) career. The percentage of the participant responses identified to these themes answering the question(s) are depicted below (See Table 7). Also listed in the table is a category that describes the type of data this question retrieved. For this research question, each of the characteristics and themes contributes to the factors that women leaders who lead authentically use to define success, therefore, the findings support the research question.

Table 7

*RQ4 - Research Question Four*

RQ4 - How do women leaders who lead with authenticity define success for themselves?	Success Factors
IQ9: At the end of the day, how do you define success for yourself?	
IQ10: What would constitute failure for you?	

(continued)

COMMON THEMES	
Personal Fulfillment & Happiness	25%
Family & Friends	22%
Helping Others	22%
Career	30%

The results of the study indicate that success is defined by women leaders as having a successful career, performing meaningful work that provides personal fulfillment and happiness. The ability to follow natural instincts without having to give in or surrender to things that are important to personal values or beliefs. Life would be filled with abundant relationships; a strong, healthy family and a trusted circle of friends. If married, that marriage would be one characterized as loving and supportive. If a mother, she would be respected by her children, disciplined, and a person that her children want to spend time with. Additionally, life would be of high quality, filled with good health, a satisfying lifestyle with a wholesome balance between the demands of both work and home. At the end of the day, a successful life would entail not settling for something less than one had hoped to attain. The findings are consistent with and extend previous research. The participant accounts and descriptions of their experiences with authenticity resulted in the identification of four significant success factors.

- Personal fulfillment and success
- Relationship, family, and friends
- Helping others
- Career

**Results for research question five.** Research question five asked. Would successful women leaders recommend being authentic to aspiring women leaders? To answer this question, two interview questions focused on what successful women leaders would do differently about authenticity, and whether or not they would recommend being authentic to aspiring women leaders. Participants provided details as to what they would have done differently and offered their suggestions. These questions are important because the answers provide insight and lessons learned from the mistakes that successful women leaders have made during their lifetime, enabling aspiring women leaders to learn from and avoid repeating.

**Analysis of research question five.** The two interview questions yielded a total of 48 characteristics from the transcript data. From these characteristics, 11 unique themes emerged. The top five themes included: (a) embrace authenticity earlier in life/career; (b) make adjustments; (c) leader of self, improve self-awareness, build confidence; (d) face your fears, don't be afraid to stand up, be yourself; and (e) get and be a mentor. The percentage of the participant responses identified to these themes answering the question(s) are depicted below (See Table 8). Also listed in the table is a category that describes the type of data this question retrieved. For this research question, each of the characteristics and themes contributes to the recommendations that women leaders would recommend to aspiring women leaders. Therefore, the findings support the research question.

Table 8

*RQ5 - Research Question Five*

R5 - Would successful women leaders recommend being authentic to aspiring women leaders?	Recommendations
IQ11: Reflecting on your leadership journey, what would you do differently with regard to being authentic?	
IQ12: How important is it for aspiring women leaders to act authentically?	
COMMON THEMES	
Embrace Authenticity Earlier in Life/Career	24%
Make Adjustments	24%
Leader of Self, Improve Self-Awareness, Build Confidence*	57%
Face your Fears, Don't be Afraid to Stand Up, Be Yourself*	27%
Get & Be a Mentor *	17%
* Combined Theme	

Results of the study indicate that successful women leaders would, in fact, recommend leading with authenticity to aspiring women leaders. The following recommendations were offered:

- Embrace and exhibit authenticity early in your leadership practice
- Learn to make adjustments in your behavior that reduces the dissonance between self and work, yet do not oblige you to abandon your values and personal beliefs and learn to be more confident
- Have the courage to accept and confront your fears, don't be afraid to stand up and let your voice be heard and always be yourself
- Pursue a mentoring relationship to facilitate relational learning
- Take the initiative to advance your learning, skills, and abilities

## Unusual Findings

**Research question two.** Thirty percent of the findings indicate that participants are willing to compromise their jobs to honor their values and personal beliefs. These experiences were painful for the participants to recall, and caused hardship for them both financially and emotionally. Despite the hardships caused, not one of the participants regretted leaving. They either starting looking for new employment, took another job, or started their own business.

**Research question three.** The literature review did not address the topic of God, faith and practicing reflection and mindfulness as strategies for maintaining authenticity and overcoming a setback caused by leading with authenticity. However, 37% of the participant responses identified it as an important part of the healing process. Having a connection with God, leaning on their faith and practicing reflective and mindfulness exercises seemed to provide the encouragement needed to overcome a setback and move forward.

**Research question four.** The literature review suggested that material reward was more of a success factor for men than women. Dyke and Murphy (2006) identified that material success was determined to be a significant contributor for men, 45% of the male participants identified with the dimension, compared to only 15% for women. Only one participant in this study mentioned money or material reward as a success factor. Therefore, it was not even identified as a theme. P5 mentioned in her definition of success:

On the material side, I want to make enough money that I can take care of myself, my loved ones and that I can have a retirement without being stressed

out or driving me crazy. So I want to have enough money to live comfortably. I don't need 10 million dollars, I want to be generative, and that is pretty much it (P5, personal communication, February 4, 2017).

The researcher found that while this finding seems somewhat consistent with the literature, it was unusual, as she expected more than one participant to at least mention it.

### **Study Conclusion**

The findings of the study bring additional clarity and gravity to the personal experiences of women leaders and the importance that authenticity plays in both their professional and personal life. The interview process was at times extremely emotional; the researcher could sense the intensity of the struggles that many of the participants had experienced during their careers. This phenomenon, when investigated at this level of detail, reveals a much more pervasive problem. The participants, when given an opportunity to share their experiences, seemed grateful for the opportunity. Additionally, they appeared excited that the research would be used to prepare learning materials to help instill confidence, encouragement, and support for future aspiring women leaders.

The conclusive findings from the study indicate that be true to self, genuine and become a leader of self, improve self-awareness, and build confidence was identified by participant responses at 67% and 57% respectively. Both self-awareness and increased confidence could help to alleviate the fear that women experience when attempting to practice being true to themselves and living an authentic life. It is also evident from the findings that women benefit from the use of support groups and

mentoring relationships to promote their development while encouraging them to honor their values and beliefs by demonstrating their authenticity.

It is important to note that 47% of the participants in this study were identified as self-employed, 40% employed and 13% unemployed. The participants identified as self-employed may have contributed to the unusual finding identified with Research Question two, where women have either lost their jobs or have chosen to leave their jobs due to a misalignment between their authenticity, personal values/beliefs, and their working environment.

Eighty-seven percent of the participants from this study made up the Baby Boomer and Generation X groups, with two outliers representing the Traditional/Silent Generation and the Generation Y/Millennial groups at 7% each. It was unexpected to have had a representative from the Traditional/Silent Generations, particularly since the youngest of that generations would be over the age of 70 and well past retirement age. However, despite the age gap, the results from the study did not indicate any significant variation from one generation to the next. Additional studies with a larger representation of the Generation Y/Millennial generational group may provide additional findings/results.

## **Implications**

The results of the study have shown that the significance of practicing authenticity and being true to self is important to the participants as expressed in the literature by Cashman (2008), George (2003), and Terry (1993). Evidence from each of the constructs of the theoretical framework of authentic leadership (Gardner et al., 2005) emerged in the findings from the participants. Self-awareness, the foundational

component of authentic leadership, was expressed in themes representing 57% of the participant responses. Suggested actions for leaders included the requisite of continuously improving oneself, and developing resilience as a means to build self-confidence. Internalized moral perspective was expressed through the themes of fostering ethical behavior and doing the right thing and represented 17% and 19% of the responses respectively. Balanced processing of information was not directly expressed in the participant responses. However, it was an inferred result of many of the themes conveyed in both the literature and in the interview responses. The final construct of relational transparency was identified as a strategy to maintain authenticity under the theme, being transparent. The outcomes of practicing relational transparency was reflected in the themes relating to relationships with family, friends and work colleagues. The existing research regarding gender bias, role congruity theory and the challenges and social costs that they pose to women leaders appear to be consistent with the findings. The differences between men and women as it applies to the importance of family and relationships, leadership styles and definitions of success were also communicated by the participants and are consistent with existing studies and literature.

**Implications for empowering women leaders.** This study brings a voice to the many women leaders who have experienced challenges, bias and discrimination in the workforce. The results of this study suggest that women leaders are advancing in their struggles to demonstrate more authenticity in the workforce. The results also recommend that women leaders start practicing authenticity earlier in their lives and careers, and to accomplish this by overcoming fear and increasing self-awareness so that self-confidence can be used to confront the stereotypical ideals that exist in



corporate cultures. The result of this study will provide the basis for learning materials that can be shared with generations of women leaders so that together, with understanding, encouragement and the sharing of best practices, women leaders can initiate and promote change by challenging the status quo.

**Implications for identifying gender differences and educating the workforce.** By investigating successful authentic women leaders, their strategies, and challenges, the study clarifies how successful authentic women measure success. This information has the potential to provide evidence of the differences between men and women, what is important to women, what they value and how they define success. Thereby, bringing light to many of the small adjustments and flexibilities that can be accommodated by corporations to alleviate many of the challenges women face and to increase the quality of life both at home and in the workplace. Furthermore, the information gathered from the study may be used to educate the workforce and to promote social and cultural change.

**Implications for promoting change.** Finally, the study provides more clarity on the phenomenon of authenticity because it integrates the knowledge gained through theory, research and practical experience to bring forth a more holistic and complete view of its application. The study identified the importance that authenticity has on the success of women leaders in both their professional and personal lives. It identified the various challenge and barriers that have existed in the workplace as a result of gender stereotyping and the socialization of persistent and aged gender roles. The study magnifies the rationale and impetus for a change. The implied and communicated definition of leadership in corporate America is in need of reform and should be

objectively measured by goal attainment using influence as a force for change. Formal recognition of the varying dimensions and role differences of a woman leader's life should be acknowledged by placing a high value on work-life balance and allowing for more flexibility in the traditional eight-hour day and workplace reporting requirements. These changes have the potential to positively influence a woman's pursuit of an executive leadership position since the perceived sacrifice and consequences to the family may be lessened.

## **Recommendations**

**Researcher observations.** As part of the data review and analysis process, the researcher contemplated to what extent the challenges and barriers to leading with authenticity were self-imposed versus externally imposed. Of the six themes the researcher identified (a) management; (b) work environment and culture; (c) gender differences; and (d) family commitments as four external themes and (e) being true to self, genuine; and (f) value differences as two internal themes. The external themes represent the challenges and barriers from which the leader has little control. These obstacles include situations that are imposed upon the leader and which the leader has limited influence to affect.

The internal challenges and barriers represent situations where the leader maintains direct control and has the best opportunity to influence and affect. The external influences have been addressed in the literature review and are to a large degree well understood. It is the internal themes that warrant further investigation. Interview question seven asked. How do you maintain your authenticity as a leader? This question yielded the following six themes, listed in descending order: (a)

being self-aware; (b) faith, prayer, and reflection; (c) doing the right thing; (d) overcoming fear, having confidence; (e) being transparent; and (f) seeking support from strong women and friends. Additionally, Interview question eight asked. If you ever have a setback from being authentic, how do you recover? Six themes emerged and are listed in descending order: (a) find my own path, move forward; (b) faith, prayer, and reflection; (c) seek counsel and support from others; (d) it takes time; (e) don't take it personal and (f) make amends, apologize. As discussed in the unusual findings section, 37% of the participant responses identified God, faith and practicing reflection and mindfulness as strategies for both maintaining and overcoming a setback caused by leading with authenticity. This result coupled with the themes of overcoming fear, and having confidence, along with the overall findings of be true to self, genuine and become a leader of self, improve self-awareness, and build confidence represented at 67% and 57% respectively, posed yet another question. Are the internal challenges and barriers expressed by the participants a symptom of low self-confidence or could it be low self-esteem?

The literature suggests that self-confidence is a measure of an individual's belief in their ability to be successful in a particular situation or context (Perry, 2011 as cited in Sari, Ekici, Soyer & Eskiler, 2015). Self-esteem relates to an individual's evaluation of self. This construct is made up of two dimensions including both competence and worth. Competence relates to an individual's self-efficacy and the belief that they are capable; while worth is attributed to the degree of value, a person believes they possess (Gecas, 1982; Rosenberg, 1990; Rosenberg et al., 1995 as cited in Cast & Burke, 2002). The distinction between the two is slight. However, the perception of self as

being worthy may have an effect on an individual's self-confidence and their ability to believe that they are capable. The distinctions and implications should be investigated and are listed as a recommendation for future research.

Also, identified in the results is the theme of seeking counsel and support from others and becoming a leader of self and improving self-awareness. Recommendations in this area include a robust approach to establish and grow both formal and informal networks of influence. These avenues include such things as community building, community mentorship, virtual networks, communities of practice, and ways to connect through social media.

A personal development program would include the formulation of a very specific and individualized curriculum of discovery, awareness, and acceptance. The overall objective would be to promote self-confidence and self-esteem. Elements of this curriculum would include personality and competency assessments, coupled with personalized coaching to unveil individual strengths, opportunities, and passions that once embraced and integrated can serve to promote empowerment yielding a more authentic and higher quality of life. Ongoing strategies, tools, mentoring and networking support would provide encouragement to extend this authentic presence in all dimensions of life, especially in their leadership practice.

**Future research.** The study contributes to the existing body of knowledge relating to women in leadership, gender roles, and authenticity. The results of the study may serve as a starting point for additional future research. Recommendations are listed below:

1. Expand the research to include additional studies with other NAPW Chapters in other regions of the United States to compare and contrast the themes that emerge. Expanding this study will serve to improve the external validity of the findings and results. The findings from these studies may then be used to compare and contrast the work that is being conducted by LeanIn.Org and McKinsey & Company in their Women in the Workplace studies.
2. Conduct a replica study as it pertains to male leaders, to compare and contrast the themes that emerge. Contributing to the study by researching the male gender will provide a means to identify common interests providing much-needed data to reinforce and substantiate change. The study should target members from a similar professional organization as NAPW.
3. Perform a meta-analysis of the themes derived from the studies involving both genders. The results of the meta-analysis could provide insight into common challenges and barriers. Existing gender related meta-analysis studies will be used to determine the most effective design and approach.
4. Perform analysis from existing studies based on different demographic data to compare the different themes as it relates to different generations, different industries, profit vs. non-profit, and ethnic groups. Extending this study toward the different demographics of locations, generation, and type of work could provide additional insight relevant to each demographic. This information may then be used to tailor recommendations accordingly.
5. Conduct a study of self-employed women to determine the reasons for leaving the workplace, confirm if authenticity or misalignment of personal

- values/beliefs is indicated. Compare findings with results derived from similar studies, such as information from a 2013 study entitled Why Do Educated, Successful Women Leave the Workforce? Conducted by Assistant Professor of Management at University of Maine Business School (Miles, 2013).
6. Conduct research to determine the percentage of growth for women leaders advancing in leadership careers compared to the percentage of growth for women leaders leaving the workplace to become entrepreneurs. Given that 47% of the participant population were identified as self-employed additional research regarding the emergence of women as small business owners and the implications that this may have on shaping entrepreneurship education is warranted. Existing research conducted by Baylor University in 2006 include “Why Study Women’s Entrepreneurship” (de Bruin, Brush, & Welter, 2006).
  7. Conduct research to better understand the differences between self-confidence and self-esteem as it relates to women leaders in the workplace. This research will bring clarity to the terms so as to provide appropriate measures and interventions in both the application of leadership practices and the developmental materials specifically defined for women aspiring to lead with more authenticity.

Continued research in the area of authenticity has the potential to drastically change the culture that exists in corporate America.

## **Final Thoughts**

This study is of particular interest to the researcher as a successful woman leader. Having worked in male dominated shipbuilding and aerospace manufacturing

industries for the past 30 years, she spent much of her early career learning what it takes to be a successful leader, despite the challenges of being a woman. Delaying marriage and having children until her thirties, it was not until she experienced the role of wife and mother that her perspective changed. A heightened sense of awareness had overcome her thoughts as she observed the behavior in her working environment, and the sometimes demeaning attitudes projected toward herself and other female leaders, despite their education, knowledge, and contribution. The awareness struck a sense of discontent, as well as a desire to speak out against the once accepted conduct and display of bias. Many years later now, the researcher remains an advocate for equal and respectful treatment of women in the workplace.

It has always been an aspiration of the researcher to establish an enrichment center for women, so they might better prepare themselves for a career in leadership. This center would encourage self-awareness and self-acceptance as a means to develop self-confidence and self-esteem. These self-affirming attributes would serve as the best defense when trying to assume a leadership role that is stereotypically male. The doctoral program in organizational leadership at Pepperdine University has helped to restore the passion and interest in studying the practice of authenticity among women leaders. It is the belief and hope that this work will serve to encourage and promote social and cultural change for aspiring women leaders.

The results of this study will serve as the beginning of a journey to promote and advance the findings that will lead to potentially a book, training materials, workshops, and ultimately an enrichment center dedicated to the development of authentic living in both the professional and personal lives of women leaders.

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# APPENDIX A

## IRB Approval Notice



Pepperdine University  
24255 Pacific Coast Highway  
Malibu, CA 90263  
TEL: 310-506-4000

### NOTICE OF APPROVAL FOR HUMAN RESEARCH

Date: January 10, 2017

Protocol Investigator Name: Jane Felt

Protocol #: 16-11-436

Project Title: Advancing the Practice of Authentic Leadership among Professional Women: A Qualitative Phenomenological Investigation

School: Graduate School of Education and Psychology

Dear Jane Felt:

Thank you for submitting your application for exempt review to Pepperdine University's Institutional Review Board (IRB). We appreciate the work you have done on your proposal. The IRB has reviewed your submitted IRB application and all ancillary materials. Upon review, the IRB has determined that the above entitled project meets the requirements for exemption under the federal regulations 45 CFR 46.101 that govern the protections of human subjects.

Your research must be conducted according to the proposal that was submitted to the IRB. If changes to the approved protocol occur, a revised protocol must be reviewed and approved by the IRB before implementation. For any proposed changes in your research protocol, please submit an amendment to the IRB. Since your study falls under exemption, there is no requirement for continuing IRB review of your project. Please be aware that changes to your protocol may prevent the research from qualifying for exemption from 45 CFR 46.101 and require submission of a new IRB application or other materials to the IRB.

A goal of the IRB is to prevent negative occurrences during any research study. However, despite the best intent, unforeseen circumstances or events may arise during the research. If an unexpected situation or adverse event happens during your investigation, please notify the IRB as soon as possible. We will ask for a complete written explanation of the event and your written response. Other actions also may be required depending on the nature of the event. Details regarding the timeframe in which adverse events must be reported to the IRB and documenting the adverse event can be found in the *Pepperdine University Protection of Human Participants in Research: Policies and Procedures Manual* at [community.pepperdine.edu/irb](http://community.pepperdine.edu/irb).

Please refer to the protocol number denoted above in all communication or correspondence related to your application and this approval. Should you have additional questions or require clarification of the contents of this letter, please contact the IRB Office. On behalf of the IRB, I wish you success in this scholarly pursuit.

Sincerely,

Judy Ho, Ph.D., IRB Chair



Pepperdine University  
24255 Pacific Coast Highway  
Malibu, CA 90263  
TEL: 310-506-4000

cc: Dr. Lee Kats, Vice Provost for Research and Strategic Initiatives

Mr. Brett Leach, Regulatory Affairs Specialist



## APPENDIX B

### Recruitment Letter

Elizabeth Kennard

National Association of Professional Women (NAPW)

President, South Orange County Chapter

My name is Jane Felt, and I am a doctoral candidate at the Graduate School of Education and Psychology at Pepperdine University. I am currently working on my dissertation entitled:

**ADVANCING THE PRACTICE OF AUTHENTIC LEADERSHIP AMONG  
PROFESSIONAL WOMEN: A QUALITATIVE PHENOMENOLOGICAL  
INVESTIGATION.**

The purpose of the study is to examine the leadership experiences of successful women leaders across multiple generations as they pertain to the practice of authentic leadership. I would like to request the National Association of Professional Women (NAPW), South Orange County Chapter members consider participating in the study.

Fifteen participants who meet the qualifying criteria and the sampling plan will be asked to participate in an initial face to face recorded interview and a follow-up confirmatory interview.

- The initial interview will consist of 12 open-ended questions focusing on leadership style, challenges, authenticity, and success. It is anticipated to take approximately 60 minutes and will be conducted at a location convenient to the participant.

- Once the initial interview is completed and transcribed a 30-minute confirmatory interview will be conducted via Skype or telephone. The follow-up interview will serve to confirm the accuracy of the results obtained from the face to face interview.

**Criteria for Inclusion:** (Must meet all three)

1. Must be an active member of NAPW, South Orange County Chapter
2. Must have greater than 10 years of working experience
3. Must have obtained at a minimum a Bachelor's Degree level of formal education

Participation in the study is voluntary. The identity of the participant will remain confidential during and after the study. Any identifiable information obtained in connection with the study will remain confidential. The responses will be coded with a pseudonym and transcript data will be maintained separately. The audio-recordings will be destroyed once they have been transcribed.

Any member who meets the criteria above and would like to participate in the study should contact me directly at [REDACTED].

In the email, please identify which generation applies:

Baby Boomer – participant born between 1946 and 1964

Generation X – participant born between 1965 and 1981

Generation Y/Millennial – participant born between 1982 and 1999

Once the participants have been identified I will provide an informed consent form and commence interview scheduling. Interview questions will be provided to the participant two days before the interview, providing adequate time for the participant to prepare and reflect on the questions.

Should you have any questions, please contact me at [REDACTED].

Thank you,

Jane Felt

Doctoral Candidate

Pepperdine University, GSEP

[REDACTED]

## APPENDIX C

### Informed Consent

#### PEPPERDINE UNIVERSITY

#### *Graduate School of Education and Psychology (GSEP)*

### INFORMED CONSENT FOR PARTICIPATION IN RESEARCH ACTIVITIES

### ADVANCING THE PRACTICE OF AUTHENTIC LEADERSHIP AMONG PROFESSIONAL WOMEN: A QUALITATIVE PHENOMENOLOGICAL INVESTIGATION

You are invited to participate in a research study conducted by Jane Felt, MSM, MQSM, and Farzin Madjidi, Ed.D. at Pepperdine University because you are a member of the NAPW South Orange County Chapter who has at least 10 or more years of working experience and has earned, at a minimum, a Bachelor's Degree level of education. Your participation is voluntary. You should read the information below, and ask questions about anything that you do not understand, before deciding whether to participate. Please take as much time as you need to read the consent form. You may also decide to discuss participation with your family or friends. You will be given a copy of this form for your records.

#### **PURPOSE OF THE STUDY**

The purpose of the study is to examine and learn from the leadership experiences of successful women leaders across multiple generations. Investigating the unique challenges women leaders face and the strategies they employ to lead authentically. To further understand how leadership is applied, the researcher will seek to clarify how successful women leaders define and measure success, while also soliciting their recommendations for aspiring leaders.

## **STUDY PROCEDURES**

If you volunteer to participate in the study, you will be asked to:

1. Review the open-ended interview questions before the interview
2. Review the informed consent form
3. Respond to the 12 qualitative interview questions
4. Confirm/approve transcribed responses taken from the audio recording of the interview

Note: Participant must agree to be audio recorded to participate in the study

## **POTENTIAL RISKS AND DISCOMFORTS**

Participating in the study poses minimal risk to the participant. Potential risks may include breach of confidentiality and risk to reputation.

## **POTENTIAL BENEFITS TO PARTICIPANTS AND/OR TO SOCIETY**

While there are no direct benefits to the study participants, there are anticipated benefits to society.

- a. Results of the study will contribute to the specific knowledge and experience of successful women leaders providing a basis for the development of learning materials communicating the importance of authenticity and encouraging the acceptance and demonstration of authentic leadership.
- b. The study and the results will contribute to the existing body of knowledge relating to women in leadership, gender roles, and authenticity.

## **PAYMENT/COMPENSATION FOR PARTICIPATION**

You will receive a voucher good for one MBTI personality assessment to be taken outside the scope of the study. The voucher will be provided upon completion of the confirmatory interview.

The Myers-Briggs Type Indicator® (MBTI®) assessment has helped millions of people worldwide gain insights about themselves and how they interact with others—and improve how they communicate, learn, and work. It provides a powerful framework for building better relationships, driving positive change, harnessing innovation, and achieving excellence. The MBTI assessment makes Carl Jung's theory of psychological

type both understandable and highly practical by helping individuals identify their preferences in four areas ([www.CPP.com](http://www.CPP.com)).

### **CONFIDENTIALITY**

The records collected for the study will be confidential as far as permitted by law. However, if required to do so by law, it may be necessary to disclose information collected about you. Examples of the types of issues that would require me to break confidentiality are if disclosed any instances of child abuse and elder abuse. Pepperdine's University's Human Subjects Protection Program (HSPP) may also access the data collected. The HSPP occasionally reviews and monitors research studies to protect the rights and welfare of research subjects.

The data will be stored on a password-protected computer in the principal investigator's place of residence. The data will be stored for a minimum of three years. The data collected will be transcribed and coded for validity and reliability. The study will achieve high inter-rater reliability with the help of two co-raters. The co-raters will be second-year doctoral students from Pepperdine University's Excellence and Innovation project. Members of the project are in the process of writing descriptive qualitative dissertations and are familiar with the research design of a phenomenological study. A three step process will apply.

1. Each of the three panel members will individually code three interviewers using the outlined methodology.
2. The panel members will review the interview transcripts, notes, and coding results, to achieve a consensus on the major themes derived from the interviews as they relate to the interview questions and the overarching research questions.
3. The dissertation committee chairperson was asked to serve as a final decision maker in situations where the panel is not able to achieve consensus.

Any identifiable information obtained in connection with the study will remain confidential. Your responses will be coded with a pseudonym and transcript data will be maintained separately. The audiotapes will be destroyed once they have been transcribed.

### **SUSPECTED NEGLECT OR ABUSE OF CHILDREN**

Under California law, the (s) who may also be a mandated reporter will not maintain as confidential, information about known or reasonably suspected incidents of abuse or neglect of a child, dependent adult or elder, including, but not limited to, physical, sexual, emotional, and financial abuse or neglect. If any researcher has or is given such information, he or she is required to report the abuse to the proper authorities.

## **PARTICIPATION AND WITHDRAWAL**

Your participation is voluntary. Your refusal to participate will involve no penalty or loss of benefits to which you are otherwise entitled. You may withdraw your consent at any time and discontinue participation without penalty. You are not waiving any legal claims, rights or remedies because of your participation in the research study.

## **ALTERNATIVES TO FULL PARTICIPATION**

The alternative to participation in the study is not to participate or completing only the items which you feel comfortable.

## **EMERGENCY CARE AND COMPENSATION FOR INJURY**

If you are injured as a direct result of research procedures you will receive medical treatment; however, you or your insurance will be responsible for the cost. Pepperdine University does not provide any monetary compensation for injury

## **INVESTIGATOR'S CONTACT INFORMATION**

You understand that the investigator is willing to answer any inquiries you may have concerning the research herein described. You understand that you may contact the following individuals if you have any other questions or concerns about this research:

**Jane Felt** – Investigator [REDACTED]  
**Farzin Madjidi** - Dissertation Chairperson [REDACTED]  
**Lani Simpao Frazier** - Dissertation Committee Member [REDACTED]  
**Gabriella Miramontes** - Dissertation Committee Member [REDACTED]

## **RIGHTS OF RESEARCH PARTICIPANT – IRB CONTACT INFORMATION**

If you have questions, concerns or complaints about your rights as a research participant or research, in general, please contact Dr. Judy Ho, Chairperson of the Graduate & Professional Schools Institutional Review Board at Pepperdine University  
6100 Center Drive Suite 500  
Los Angeles, CA 90045, 310-568-5753 or [gpsirb@pepperdine.edu](mailto:gpsirb@pepperdine.edu).

APPENDIX D

Demographic Worksheet

**Pseudonym:** \_\_\_\_\_

**Generational Grouping:**

Traditionalists/Silent Generation – participant born 1945 and before (TSG)

Baby Boomer – participant born between 1946 and 1964 (BB)

Generation X – participant born between 1965 and 1981 (GX)

Generation Y/Millennial – participant born between 1982 and 1999 (GYM)

**Ethnicity:** \_\_\_\_\_

**Marital Status:**

- Married
- Single
- Divorced
- Widow

**Mother:** Y or N

**Highest Level Education Achieved:**

- Bachelors
- Masters
- Doctorate

**Years in Workforce:** \_\_\_\_\_

**Work Experience:**

- Non-Management
- Manager
- Middle Manager
- Executive

**For Profit or Non Profit**

**NAICS Code:** \_\_\_\_\_



## APPENDIX E

### Interview Checklist

1. Introductions/hello
  - a. Share checklist
  - b. Interview as a conversation
  - c. Looking for meaningful, rich data
2. Review Informed Consent Form
3. Complete Demographic Worksheet/Assign Pseudonym
4. Start Recording
  - a. Today is \_\_\_\_\_(Day of Week), (Date)
  - b. Interview participant is identified as \_\_\_\_\_ (pseudonym)
  - c. Participant has reviewed the informed consent document and has agreed to be audio recorded
5. Ask participant to provide brief summary of career/work experience and background
6. Start answering interview questions
7. Wrap up
  - a. Anything they would like to add
  - b. Thank you
  - c. Confirmatory Interview (call/email)