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Women Entrepreneur Experiences With Leadership and Success: A Qualitative Phenomenological Study

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Women Entrepreneur Experiences With Leadership and Success: A Qualitative

Phenomenological Study

Concordia University–Portland

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Dissertation submitted to the Faculty of the College of Education

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Abstract

Former research regarding leadership focused mainly on gender comparisons with limited research exploring women leaders independently. The purpose of this study was to understand how women entrepreneurs describe and interpret their leadership experiences as entrepreneurs, to understand how women entrepreneurs describe success, and to further understand what perceived impact leadership styles have on women's entrepreneurial success. The study answered three questions regarding how women entrepreneurs describe and interpret their experiences as leaders, how women entrepreneurs describe their success as entrepreneurs and what perceived impact leadership style has on their success. Transformational, organizational, and servant leadership theories guided this study's framework. A qualitative phenomenological study was conducted with open-ended interviews and focus groups to collect data regarding how women leaders view their leadership and success. Responses were obtained from 20 women entrepreneurs between the ages of 25 and 44. Data was analyzed by coding transcriptions for common themes which included emotions, making a difference, and freedom expressed amongst the participants. The study provides an understanding of women entrepreneurs and highlighted that the leadership characteristics the women displayed were mainly associated with transformational leadership. The most common theme related to success was having the opportunity to make a difference and participants reported a perceived impact of leadership style on success, in that transformational leadership was perceived to positively impact entrepreneurial success. In totality, more research needs to be conducted to determine how women are learning to become leaders and if the pursuit of leadership has influenced women's thoughts and beliefs regarding success.

Keywords: entrepreneurship, leadership, success, women

Dedication

This dissertation is dedicated to my two daughters Kaelyn and Kamryn. You two are the reason I push to be better. You two are by far my greatest blessings and with each day that passes, I will love you more. Know that, of all the titles that I have, mother is by far the one that makes me the proudest.

This dissertation is also dedicated to my Grandmother Ramona and Grandfather Charles. Grandma although you are not fully aware of what is happening, I pray I always make you proud. Grandpa it breaks my heart that you weren't around to see this finished. I know you're with me in spirit. Love you both!

Acknowledgments

First, I would like to acknowledge my Father God. Thank you for always reminding me that I can do anything with you in my corner. Your word has proved to be true "My grace is sufficient for you, for My strength is made perfect in weakness" (2 Corinthians 12:9). It is my ultimate prayer that all the work I do brings you honor. I can never thank you enough. Next, I would like to thank my committee members and my editor who continued to advise me during this entire process. I am truly thankful for each one of you. I also appreciate each woman who participated in my study and allowed me the opportunity to learn more about her journey. I am forever grateful to my family and friends for their patience, prayer, understanding, and encouragement during my lifetime of educational pursuits. Last, but certainly not least, I give thanks to my two daughters who are the reason I continue to strive for more.

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Chapter 1: Introduction

Introduction to the Problem

As the number of women entrepreneurs increase in the United States, there becomes a need to understand the unique role that these women are involved within a field previously dominated by men. In previous research, there has been discussion regarding the difference between men and women as leaders (Johnson, 2015). An estimated 163,000,000 women around the world are involved in a new business venture, but a gender gap still exists (Byrne, Fattoum, & Diaz-Garcia, 2018). This gender gap not only impacts women but disproportionately affects women of color (Cody, 2017). The purpose of this current phenomenological study was to bring awareness to this concept in relation to leadership and success in order to further explore women's views on success and leadership experiences.

Specifically, the study sought to better understand how women entrepreneurs describe and interpret their leadership experiences as entrepreneurs, to better understand how women entrepreneurs describe their success as entrepreneurs, and to further understand leadership styles and women's entrepreneurial success. Former researchers highlighted that women only lead 35% of entrepreneurial activity (Robb & Coleman, 2009). Women entrepreneurial leaders offer unique skills such as generosity and business leadership, which enhance company financial performance, increase corporate innovation, improve workgroup performance, and advance the private sector (Williams & Best, 2003).

Chapter 1 provides an introduction along with a description of the problem as it relates to women entrepreneurs and leaders. The background research along with the reviewed conceptual framework and themes will be discussed. Chapter 1 also includes the statement of the problem, the purpose of the study, the significance of the study, an overview of the methodology, and the

assumptions and limitations associated with the study. Finally, Chapter 1 includes an

explanation of key terms and a brief description of the organization of this dissertation.

Background, Context, History, and Conceptual Framework for the Problem

In the last decade, studies were conducted regarding women and leadership, yet these

research projects failed to expansively discern how women entrepreneurs and leadership are

intertwined (Flood, 2007). Given that women entrepreneurs are woefully underrepresented in

the United States, newer research trends appear to address this void and to solicit more data

about women entrepreneurs (Byrne et al., 2018). Previous studies were focused on differences

between men and women leadership styles, yet the prior research failed to thoroughly examine

why these men and women achieved success and how the gender differences impacted

leadership (Johnson, 2015). Feminist scholars argued that entrepreneurship discourse, the ways

in which entrepreneurship is presented, viewed, and understood is male-gendered, bound with

masculinity (Ahl & Marlow, 2012). According to Cody (2017), there has been some debate

regarding what factors are detrimental to a woman achieving and maintaining the

entrepreneurship role. The predominant research conclusions are that fewer women become

entrepreneurs as a result of the absence or inadequate amounts of human capital (Ahl & Marlow,

2012). Researchers have uncovered factors such as business experience and financial capital as

imperative to the success of an entrepreneur, regardless of gender (Ahl & Marlow, 2012).

Failure to perceive how experience or finances influence entrepreneurship has led to an

incomplete examination of women and their roles as leaders and entrepreneurs.

Former literature focused on men and leadership. There was an assumption that because

women leaders constitute less than half of entrepreneurial activity, research did not need to focus

on women (Robb & Coleman, 2009). Bass (1981) asserted that because race and gender were

not viewed as viable constructs to investigate, women and people of color were consistently overlooked in the study of leadership until the late 1970s. Bass also argued that because leadership theory and its practices are continually evolving, scholars need to challenge the leadership paradigm and broaden scopes of study to include women and people of color. Eagly and Carli (2003b) conducted research which demonstrated the advantages of studying gender differences and leadership styles.

Statement of the Problem

The number of women in entrepreneurial roles is increasing compared to that of their male counterparts (Perreault, 2014). Although the roles of women in entrepreneurship are increasing as evidenced by previous studies, the research is still limited regarding women entrepreneurs. Previous research confirmed that life experiences influenced the role of women in leadership positions (Murphey, Moss, Hanah, & Weiner, 2005). It is important to bring awareness to women in leadership roles, as more women occupy leadership positions in the United States. A problem exists in that that former research lacked the exploration related to women entrepreneurial leaders. According to Parker and Van-Praag (2010), past research helped to assist in understanding the demographic or interpersonal characteristics that helped women to become successful entrepreneurs.

The current research thus complements the prior research by discussing the lived experiences of women entrepreneurs and further explores how women entrepreneurs view their success and leadership roles. This current study augments the prior research by delving into the way that women have viewed their success, both during the pursuit and engagement of leadership positions. The first purpose of this study was to better understand how women entrepreneurs describe and interpret their leadership experiences as entrepreneurs. Secondly, the

purpose of this study was to understand how women entrepreneurs describe and interpret their leadership experiences as entrepreneurs. Finally, the third purpose of this study was to further understand what impact leadership styles have on women's entrepreneurial success.

This phenomenological qualitative research study explored the leadership experiences of female entrepreneurs. By examining data obtained from individual interviews, focus groups, and memoing and by studying the related literature regarding women entrepreneurs, the researcher attempted to give a voice to the stories of women as entrepreneurs. The women participants helped to highlight the purpose of understanding the leadership styles women entrepreneurs use.

Research Questions

The phenomenon of women leaders and entrepreneurs is becoming more prevalent as shown in the rising number of women leaders (Perreault, 2014). This study explored the way in which women entrepreneurs view their success as well as their self-reported leadership style. This study also explored the perceived impact that leadership style has on success. Focus groups and open-ended individual interviews provided in-depth exploration. The topic of women entrepreneurs and success is not often discussed in previous research and needs further exploration to inform future studies and gain more insight (Parker & Van-Praag, 2010). The exploratory questions that guided this study were:

1. How do women entrepreneurs describe and interpret their leadership experiences as entrepreneurs?

2. How do women entrepreneurs describe their success as entrepreneurs?

3. From the perspective of women entrepreneurs, what impact do leadership styles have on their entrepreneurial success?

The research questions were used to assist in increasing the insight into the world of women entrepreneurs.

Rationale, Relevance, and Significance of the Study

Due to the rapid increase in the number of women in entrepreneurial roles, seeking more information on the topic is important (Small Business Administration, 2010). Women-owned businesses are growing at a rate five times faster than the national average (U.S. Senate Committee on Small Business, 2017). The current gap in the literature indicates that entrepreneurship research focuses on gender differences in comparison to understanding women leaders as potentially unique from men leaders (Baum, Frese, Baron, & Katz, 2007; Hoeritz, 2013). Future research needs to instead focus on the main issues that aspiring women entrepreneurial leaders encounter in comparison to the former research attention of only male entrepreneurs and leaders (Parker & Van-Praag, 2010). This study incorporated the perspective of women as leaders in an attempt to close the research gap.

Former research articles were reviewed and referenced with the intention to better understand the perceived impact that leadership style has on success for women entrepreneurial leaders. The former research helped to assist in understanding what characteristics enabled the women to become successful entrepreneurs and what former research was missing (Parker & Van-Praag, 2010). The in-depth study of prior research helped to highlight the way this topic could be explored more thoroughly. This research was based upon the perceptions and lived experiences of a purposive sample of 20 successful women entrepreneurs, who own and operate a business and have met financial or non-financial goals.

Research has been limited as it relates to women leaders and their entrepreneurial success. According to Mahanta (2016), "an entrepreneur is an important constituent of the

development process and an integral part of the socio-economic transformation process" (p. 1).

Mahanta (2016) posited that women in entrepreneurial roles can be more powerful than as a

mere worker. The intended significance of this study was to close the literature gap that exists

regarding the topic of women entrepreneurial leaders and to bring awareness to these women.

Definition of Terms

There are three terms that are discussed throughout this research. Definitions of

entrepreneurship, success, and leadership are often defined differently from person to person. To

be sure of a thorough understanding of the terms as they relate to this study, the researcher

defines the terms for the reader. Each term is also defined in the Chapter 4 results section from

the study participant perspective.

Entrepreneurship. The term entrepreneurship stems from the French word that has the

meaning "to undertake" (Cody, 2017). For the purposes of this study, the definition of

entrepreneurship is using enterprise to create new business, develop new ideas, and implement

ideas for success (Kobia & Sikalieh, 2010; Nixon, 2004). The term, entrepreneur "is a relatively

recent origin and evolving one" (Mahanta, 2016, p. 1). In this regard, entrepreneurship is a

dynamic process of vision, change, and creation (Kuratko & Hodgetts, 2004). According to

Kobia and Sikalieh (2010), entrepreneurship is thought of by developing an idea, assessing it for

its attractiveness, using the most appropriate strategies for implementing and managing the idea.

The term of entrepreneurship does not have a one-size-fits-all definition; therefore, this study did

not seek to define entrepreneurship but instead focused on expanding the views regarding

entrepreneurship.

Leadership. Leadership is the ability to influence other people to achieve a common

goal (Northouse, 2004). Much like entrepreneurship, the word leadership can be a difficult

concept to define. The attempt to thoroughly define leadership has brought forth different beliefs

and understandings. Leadership is, most fundamentally, about making changes.

Northouse (2013) defined leadership as "a process whereby an individual influences a group of

people to achieve a common goal" (p. 3). Northouse (2013) defined three competencies of

leadership, which include problem-solving skills, social judgment skills, and knowledge. A

prevalent thread in the many debates about the definition of leadership is an assumption that

leadership can be both taught and learned (De La Rey, 2005). Flood (2007) provided a rather

simple definition of a leader, simply someone who has followers. According to Flood (2007),

leadership is a term often used in research but is rarely understood. In the current study, the

concept of leadership was not being defined but instead being expanded on from the perception

of participants.

      Success. Success is defined as personal satisfaction with performance measures (Weber

& Schafer, 2007). According to Weber and Schafer (2007), attempts to define a successful

entrepreneur led to several different definitions, including an individual who has reached

financial accountability, experienced job creation, or accomplished growth in turnover. Reijonen

and Komppula (2007) defined success as continued business operations and defined failure as

going out of business. Bullough (2008) and Still, Soutar, and Walker (2005) defined success as

personal satisfaction or performance measures. According to Reijonen and Komppula, some

entrepreneurs defined success as earning a living or adequate income, while other entrepreneurs

expressed their belief that success was customer satisfaction as well as respect. Subjective

definitions that exist regarding success were frequently identified as essential to the entrepreneur

as were objective definitions; therefore, reaching both intrinsic and extrinsic goals may be

measures of success (Weber & Schafer, 2007). Most often, economic achievement was a

determinant, or measure, of success. However, success has been referred to as a multi-dimensional concept consisting of financial and nonfinancial factors (Ahmad & Seet, 2009). Walker and Brown (2004) described success using a financial categorization, such as profitability and growth. Whereas Ahmad and Seet (2009) referenced revenue, profit, or return on investment within the specific business. The intention of this study was not to define success; rather the study used the information shared by participants to expand the views of success and to further develop the concept of success.

Assumptions, Delimitations, and Limitations

Assumptions are necessary for research because they allow the researcher to complete the study understanding that there may be some circumstances that are not ideal (Simon & Goes, 2013). Simon and Goes (2013) found that research often relies on unproven beliefs that are necessary to develop the study further. An assumption as it relates to research is something that can be challenging to control for and hard to recognize. One assumption of this study was that the participants were honest with their responses when asked questions. This can pose a challenge to the data results if a participant was not honest.

The delimitations of research studies are characteristics that arise from the limitations and are specific choices made by the researcher (Simon & Goes, 2013). The choice of the problem to explore was the first delimiting step since there are other problems that could have been the focus of the research. Since the current research chose to focus on success as the identifying research problem, this could be viewed as a delimitation. The study's participation criteria were delimited to women entrepreneurs. The study focused on previous research pertinent to women leaders. It is not feasible to focus on all genders as it relates to leadership, as that is far too broad. Another delimitation was how the women subjects were selected and which prerequisites

they had to meet. The women chosen for this study were selected from three Facebook groups.

The participants were also required to have access to a Zoom account and familiarity with the

platform (Zoom, 2017). These delimitations prevented inclusion of more women, as women

who may have been eligible, but were not on Facebook were not given an opportunity. Lastly,

the age of the women entrepreneurs in this study was a delimitation because it excluded some

women based on age, focusing on a specific age group of women.

Limitations for research are often beyond the control of the researcher (Simon & Goes,

2013). A limitation was the way the data was collected through using interviews. Self-reported

data was given during the focus groups and individual interviews and therefore were perception

based and potentially biased. The reports that the participants gave were not verified, a

limitation of qualitative research. The idea that the reports could not be verified had the potential

to impact the ability to complete a thorough analysis of the results. That anonymity could not be

guaranteed was also a limitation of the current study. This, in turn, may have impacted the

participant answers when being interviewed. However, despite the limitations, being aware of

these concerns helped the researcher conduct the qualitative phenomenological study.

Summary

As highlighted, leadership is a concept studied frequently (Johnson, 2015). Prior

research often overlooked the way in which women view and implement leadership. This lack of

information highlighted the gap in the literature and made evident that there is a level of

importance in researching this topic more in-depth (Baum et al., 2007). This study aimed to

further explore the lived experiences of women entrepreneurs. This research explored the

questions: How do women entrepreneurs describe and interpret their leadership experiences as

entrepreneurs; How do women entrepreneurs describe their success as entrepreneurs; and, from

the perspective of women entrepreneurs, what impact does leadership styles have on their entrepreneurial success?

Using phenomenology as a methodology can help further the research on the essence of entrepreneurship as women experience it and potentially shed light on the way leadership and the women entrepreneurs view success (Coyle & Ellinger, 2001). Women's perspectives have historically been absent from research on entrepreneurship; therefore, it is essential that research reflect the voices of women. The analysis of the lived experiences of the women helps to guide future research. Following, Chapter 2 will review former researcher that is related to women leaders and entrepreneurs.

Chapter 2: Literature Review

The number of women in leadership roles is increasing such that women now maintain 20% of the top leadership roles in major agencies (Janus, 2008). Leadership is growing in different career clusters, but especially in entrepreneurial roles (Jang, 2013). The purpose of this research was to understand women leaders and the ways in which they implement leadership skills. In relation to leadership, research related to entrepreneurship has also increased in the amount of research that has been completed (Perreault, 2014). This study explored women entrepreneurs and their view regarding leadership style and success. Perreault (2014) posited that recent research regarding leadership focuses on gender comparisons or solely on men. This study attempted to further the research needed in order to highlight the growing number of women leaders (McAleavy, 2003).

Introduction to the Literature Review

Limited research studies focus specifically on women business owners or women entrepreneurs (Coyle & Ellinger, 2001; McAleavy, 2003; Perreault, 2014). The problem with minimal research with a gender focus is that as a result, researchers may overlook the influence of the increasing number of women in leadership roles (Bullough, 2008). Research by Coyle and Ellinger focused on gender differences of business owners, traits of entrepreneurs, and reasons for and success of entrepreneurship. The current study posited that success in entrepreneurship is related to the traits that women possess as leaders. Women-owned businesses have been a dynamic and fast-growing segment of the economy for the last 10 years (Crocker, 2003). With the increase in entrepreneurial women, research should explore how women entrepreneurs view their success and their leadership. With women in businesses increasing, the question lies in how women entrepreneurs view their success and their leadership. For example, common traits

that the leaders possess are one of the ways in which the results of leadership success could differ (Bullough, 2008). The existing research that does exist highlights the differences in leadership traits among men and women, indicating the potential need for further exploration of these gender differences (Rosser, 2001).

The literature search began with the selection of the following databases: ERIC, EBSCO host, and published dissertations, books, texts, and theses in ProQuest, (PQDT). The initial terms researched were women, success, leadership, and entrepreneurs. To increase the understanding of the women leadership style and entrepreneurial success, the review of the literature included the development of leadership styles and the way in which implementation or execution of leadership occurs. A comprehensive review of literature related to women in leadership, women who are entrepreneurs, definitions of success, as well as research on transformational leadership, was completed.

Being a successful woman may contradict the way others view a woman leader's overall success (Flood, 2007). According to Flood (2007), successful women have many barriers to success in common; this could include discrimination or lack of resources, and these are examples of barriers that could be preventing the success of women. Therefore, the outcome leadership has on women leader successes may be quite different than that of a male counterpart (McElwee & Al-Riyami, 2003). Research regarding women entrepreneurs and their leadership skills is very limited as both are a relatively new phenomenon. Flood proposed there is a scarcity of research on the developmental needs of women in leadership roles. The scarcity appears to be directly related to the number of women who are entrepreneurs; with newer research regarding women in entrepreneurial roles, there is a need to move research in that direction (McElwee & Al-Riyami, 2003). Although there is a lot of research regarding men in leadership, this current

study did not contain references related to the differences between men and women and their levels of success. Using the research from this study may help future researchers and women gain more insight into the lived experiences of women leaders and entrepreneurs. Not all women who are entrepreneurs are successful, and this leaves quite a bit of confusion regarding what makes or breaks success in the entrepreneurial realm (Dyke & Murphy, 2006). Based on former research, it is not known how leadership style is related to the success of women entrepreneurs (Bullough, 2008).

Business success and women entrepreneurs are terms that intertwine, but minimal amounts of research have been conducted regarding combining the two concepts together. "While women entrepreneurs own almost half of the privately held businesses in the U.S., little is known or reported about their informal learning methods or about how these learning and life experiences contribute to their business practices and business success" (Howard, 2010, p. 1). There are different beliefs regarding the ways in which women businesses could be successful. With the increase in women entrepreneurs, it is important to understand what is influencing their success (Jones, 2014a). Claims have been raised in the theoretical literature regarding the relationship between transformational leadership, entrepreneurship, and the innovation process (Bass, 1981; Bass & Avolio, 1994). However, research has not studied in-depth the association between success and leadership style for women (Rosser, 2001). Therefore, there is limited insight into women entrepreneurial success and the rationale behind the increase in the number of women in leadership roles (McAleavy, 2003).

Conceptual Framework

According to Imenda (2014), "both conceptual and theoretical frameworks represent an integrated understanding of issues, within a given field of study, which enables the researcher to

address a specific research problem" (p. 189). This concept could not be summed up in one theory, so a conceptual framework helped to explain the research concept. The concept of women entrepreneurial leaders is intriguing because there is not necessarily one way to conceptualize success. The best way to learn is through prior research and by meeting with women who have had various experiences as it relates to being a leader and an entrepreneur.

The topic of this dissertation derived from women who desire to start their own business and to be effective in the way the women work with others. Therefore, the importance of the study was to determine the perceived influence leadership style has on success. The research that does exist is conflicting in that there are many forms of leadership that may correlate with increased success, including transformational leadership (Rosser, 2001). There is a need to understand the influence that leadership has on entrepreneurial success, according to Rieger (2012), which is how the conceptual framework helped to inform this study.

The conceptual framework theories guiding this study were organizational, transformational, and servant leadership theories. These three theories stand out from other leadership theories as the focus is not only on the leader but on the individuals being led. Additionally, the conceptual framework that guided this study was the lived experiences of these women leaders. This guided the researcher to understand the way in which women view their success.

As an entrepreneur, the researcher recognized that leadership is a complex term. In addition, conceptualizing success is also complex. Former research has helped to further the understanding of the importance of identifying personal beliefs and perceptions of leadership. Formerly, few researchers worked to further understand the way in which women view their success (Bass & Avolio, 1994). According to research by Bass and Avolio (1994), it is ideal to

have one definition regarding women in leadership, but the researcher recognizes that the definition has to be unique to the individual (Bass & Avolio, 1994). Success is a topic that is related to leadership (Rieger, 2012).

The theoretical framework that guided this study was based on the three leadership theories of transformational leadership, organizational leadership, and servant leadership. These concepts were all expressed as the most common theories expressed by women leaders (Appelbaum, Shapiro, Didus, Luongo, & Paz, 2013). Jonsen, Maznevski, and Schneider (2010) discussed that there was no major difference between leadership styles and effectiveness of women who hold the various positions. These theories were used to help answer the research questions as the theories explain the way that leadership is implemented and the impact that it has on followers. The researcher used this information as a guide to better understand the implementation of the theories and the overall impact that these theories have.

The selected framework was used to illuminate the lived experiences, beliefs, and perspectives of the participants. The conceptual framework presented is informed by several different forms of research, both formal and informal. The conceptual framework aimed to highlight all aspects related to women entrepreneurial leaders. The framework also focused on being as comprehensible as possible. The framework forms a foundation upon which further exploration can be based.

Organizational leadership. Organizational development is the concept in which leaders create an organized plan to develop their business in a way that increases the business success (Bass & Avolio, 1994). Organizational leadership is frequently transformative; therefore, this type of leadership must be planned out. This leadership type includes attention to common goals. "Leaders direct their energies toward individuals who are trying to achieve something

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together" (Northouse, 2013, p. 6). Directing energy to followers is a common focus for organizational leadership. Organizational development overall is a detailed, typically well-researched plan that is implemented over time. Organizational development is transformational in nature. Organizational leadership helps explain concepts of how leaders can use organizational development and strategy to be more successful in reaching business goals.

      Transformational leadership. The theory of transformational leadership is transformative in nature, which confirms the idea that leadership does not have one simple or strategic definition but can be described differently. Schoon and Duckworth (2012) and Jang (2013) reported that there was a significant relationship between a transformational leadership style and the career success of women in nonprofit organizations. Appelbaum et al. (2013) observed that women leaders associate themselves with transformational leadership compared to other types of leadership styles. The women from the Appelbaum et al. study reported that this form of leadership has the greatest influence on the women whom the leaders are leading as well as their overall success.

      Innovation is a key component to transformational leadership (Gumusluoğlu & Ilsev, 2009). According to Gumusluoğlu and Ilsev (2009), without the innovation component, transformations cannot happen. "Transformational leadership is a process that changes and transforms people. It is concerned with emotions, values, ethical standards, and long-term goals" (Northouse, 2013, p. 185). Effective transformational leaders are capable of learning about themselves and their environment and are capable of developing their abilities along many dimensions (Bradberry & Greaves, 2012). Bradberry and Greaves highlighted that with transformational leadership, the characteristics and traits are often strategies that can be associated with success.

Servant leadership. Servant leadership is serving others first to lead (Stone & Patterson, 2005). "The servant leader's behavior motivates, influences, inspires, and empowers followers to focus on ways to serve others better. It is a humble means of affecting follower behavior" (Stone & Patterson, 2005, p. 23). Servant leadership does not occur in a vacuum, instead occurring within a given organizational context and in a particular culture (Northouse, 2013). The central goal of servant leadership is to create healthy organizations, which help to nurture individual growth, strengthen organizational performance, and, in the end, produce a positive impact on society (Northouse, 2013).

There is debate regarding women and their leadership approach and how it may or may not differ from that of men (Eagly & Carli, 2003b). Prior research focused in-depth on the differences but failed to focus on the insights gained from the unique approaches. Johnson (2015) highlighted that the leadership approach aligns closely with entrepreneurial success among men. Flood (2007) highlighted that the women's leadership differs from that of men. Johnson (2015) completed a meta-analysis of former studies that highlight the difference between women and men in leadership and reported significant evidence regarding gender differences in leadership styles. Johnson (2015) offered that women show more participatory behaviors in leadership, but on the opposing end, men seem to be more directive with their leadership approach.

It is well recognized that women tend to be modest about their capabilities, whereas men usually overestimate theirs (Thébaud, 2010). According to Crockett (2017), former research on differential leadership styles between the genders has demonstrated that women can provide a beneficial perspective to various workforces, especially regarding transformational leadership. Leadership is important because it is implemented across communities. All over the world,

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women are still underrepresented in positions of power, responsibility as well as leadership, despite the increase in their formal employment over the last 50 years (De La Rey, 2005). This phenomenon has intrigued researchers to complete additional research to better comprehend the continued underrepresentation of women (Adler, 1997).

Review of Research Literature and Methodological Literature

     Defining leadership. Northouse (2013) suggested that individual leaders must make important decisions. Northouse also indicated that leaders must choose to lead others appropriately and that the characteristics of leaders include demonstrating respect, honesty, understanding, openness, and reliability. Behaving ethically is a key component of every leadership approach as well. "Behaving ethically is doing the right thing in the right way" (Northouse, 2013, p. 229). Behaving ethically can be a challenge when leaders are encouraged in the opposing direction. This is a challenge because leaders must lead appropriately but also set the followers up for success.

     Leadership is a concept that has been researched in the field of education for some time. Bass (1981) regarded leadership as the most critical factor in the success or failure of organizations, in the business and industrial sector and in the military arena. According to Berry and Franks (2010), women have specific qualities that are imperative to the survival and success of any business, but the women bring a unique and new paradigm to corporations willing to be inclusive. Berry and Franks (2010) also observed that the number of women entrepreneurs is growing rapidly. An important trend to highlight is that currently, more women are becoming employers and running their own businesses worldwide. According to Berry and Franks, 38% of the entrepreneur firms that exist in the United States are run by women.

Being organized is a key component in successful leadership. Swayne and Tucker (1973) observed the following makeup and characteristics for entrepreneurs: ego drive, empathy, energy, and willpower along with the need for achievement. In addition, Swayne and Tucker highlighted that the characteristics of entrepreneurs include creativity and ability to solve problems, self-fulfillment, and being aggressive and competitive. Finally, entrepreneurs are intelligent, self-confident, risk-taking, goal, and action-oriented, curious, and thick-skinned, as noted by Swayne and Tucker. Leadership characteristics combine to help strengthen the leader. Northouse (2007) reported that the confidence to help direct others to the same cause strengthens leaders. Additionally, leaders are also strengthened to work diligently on the goals set before them. Northouse listed intelligence, self-confidence, determination, integrity, and sociability as major leadership traits.

In past literature, leadership was often difficult to define and to evaluate (Flood, 2007). Some studies highlighted the traits of leaders (McElwee & Al-Riyami, 2003). Leaders fill a multitude of roles and perform many duties each day; this includes highlighting tasks for followers, being innovative with approaches, and being influential. Bass (1981) highlighted that there are almost as many different definitions of leadership as there are persons who have attempted to define the leadership concept. In *Leadership: Theory and Practice,* Northouse (2007) defined leadership as "a process whereby an individual influences a group of individuals to achieve a common goal" (p. 3). According to Meers (2009), the need to look at different forms of leadership has continued to be emphasized as research has entered the twenty-first century and the age of the so-called knowledge worker.

There continues to be an emphasis on studying the actions of a leader without a clear definition of what a leader or leadership is. Flood noted that leadership also includes directing

others for a purpose or cause. To date, there is not one agreed upon definition of leadership, nor is there one easy way of measuring leadership (Bradberry & Greaves, 2012). Berry and Franks (2010) offered that leadership is one of many aspects related to success. Prior research often excluded women as it related to leadership (Johnson, 2015); therefore, the purpose of this phenomenological study was to explore the leadership perceptions of women leaders.

Gender and leadership. According to Eagly and Carli (2003a), women innately possess many of the leadership characteristics related to success; however, women are not successful leaders automatically. Being an effective leader is "marked by an androgynous mixture of traits including intelligence, social skills, initiative, and the ability to persuade" (Northouse, 2013, p. 310). Research shows that both men and women possess these traits (Eagly & Carli, 2003a). Soriano (2016) stated that women's leadership desires to promote noble, fair, as well as empowering leadership beliefs, styles, and practices. Crockett (2017) found that male characteristics were more preferred than female characteristics in the majority of workforce settings. According to Adler (1997), feminine is a word that refers to the characteristics that women possess. Fondas (1997) argued that "there are character traits, interaction styles, and patterns of reasoning, speaking, and communicating that are culturally ascribed as feminine attributes" (p. 260). Eagly and Carli noted that gender is an important component of leadership, which has been studied in previous research to better understand gender differences and comparisons.

Prior research often reviewed the impact of gender on leadership as that plays a role regarding how leadership is defined. Fondas (1997) discussed leadership as it relates to gender and explained the characteristics women possess as leaders such as empathy, helpfulness, acceptance of others, cooperative relationships, and collective interest toward integrative goals,

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including group cohesiveness. Fondas observed that these characteristics are the opposite of men who are often self-interested, efficient, tough-minded, and assertive.

The findings from former research regarding women and leadership are quite common as it relates to how gender is related to leadership characteristics. Eagly and Carli (2003a) researched the women advantage in leadership, where it has been believed that assertive women are more likely than men to lead in a style that is effective under contemporary conditions. Eagly and Carli (2003a) found that women were effective in all leadership roles. Eagly and Carli (2003a) also indicated that more women are becoming leaders. One major finding of the study by Eagly and Carli was that promotions happen far less for women as opposed to men, even with the same qualifications. One key point from the study by Eagly and Carli was that women did not have the same tools for the powerful leadership job as that of their male counterpart, although they were as qualified for the key positions.

There are many approaches for women, but there has been little study of the intersection of gender and leadership. Chin (2004) focused on feminist leaders and identified challenges faced by women in leadership positions by feminist leaders. The major issues that emerged during a web-based dialogue about feminist leadership were also explored. The results of this study displayed the intersection that exists between theories of leadership and feminism. Chin identified challenges that women face related to feminism and concluded that several other factors also need to be considered when analyzing the styles of women leaders, such as issues of race, ethnicity, ability, status, and sexual orientation, which make issues of leadership more complex. The women do have the chance to push through those challenges and are able to accomplish the leadership success desired.

Former leadership research mainly focused on men as leaders and mainly compared women leaders to men (Bullough, 2008). According to Bullough (2008), in the past women's ability to be in leadership positions has been hindered by discrimination as well as well as by stereotyping. This stereotyping has been thought to negatively affect the success that women had in their leadership roles. Although women in positions of leadership and women entrepreneurs have increased in the 21st century, there is still little information regarding this new phenomenon. According to Howard (2010), "Research studies about women business owners or women entrepreneurs are few, and previous research has focused on gender differences of business owners, traits of entrepreneurs, and reasons for success of entrepreneurship" (p. 12). Howard compared and contrasted men and women leaders and discussed gender differences along with the role that gender plays in the overall success. Howard found that there were common traits that existed amongst women leaders and entrepreneurs.

Future Research with a Theoretical Framework

Currently, there is a need to have more women in leadership roles. In the past, women's ability to be in a leadership role was hindered by many different factors. These factors include gender discriminations such as the glass ceiling, a barrier impeding women's ability to advance in leadership (Dean, 2015). These factors are found to negatively influence the success women have with leading. Due to this, men were often placed in roles of leadership (Johnson, 2015). Women have been able to push past the barriers, but former research has been limited to men since they often held the leadership positions (Flood, 2007). New research is needed to expand outward to be inclusive of women and their leadership (Rosser, 2001).

According to Dean (2015), the issue of having more women leaders goes far beyond equality in the workplace, or amongst men. Dean (2015) reported that women are as capable as men of being leaders. This is a belief that is not always accepted or practiced. In the article by Dean (2015), women highlight that having more women leaders would improve their quality of life. The researcher also indicated that there are several barriers, such as the glass ceiling that prevents this from taking place.

Not every woman is interested in becoming an entrepreneur. McElwee and Al-Riyami (2003) studied why some women choose to develop their entrepreneurial capacity. The authors reviewed motivation factors to determine women's choices. According to McElwee and Al-Riyami (2003), approximately 40% of women believe that having more women in leadership positions in business as well in government would do a lot to improve the quality of life for all women (p. 340). The women know that it would help other women to see that they too can strive to be leaders. McElwee and Al-Riyami (2003) noted that women would give others the opportunity to work as leaders without feeling like they must fit a certain mold. In addition, 40% of women say having more women in leadership roles would have at least some positive impact on all these women's lives (p. 340). The positive effect would help other women by giving examples of the possibilities of being positioned in a leadership role. This can be done through educating other women who aspire to be leaders.

In the past, women have been put in positions that make it challenging to become leaders as well as entrepreneurs. With this reality, women have often shown less interest in roles of this capacity. Presently, with women breaking through the barriers, more insight is needed to better understand this shifting dynamic. According to Raghuvanshi, Agrawal, and Gosh (2017), barriers to women's success in entrepreneurship are all researched equally. Gosh also states that

understanding these barriers could yield better insight into the influence that they have on women.

A leadership approach can inspire or direct followers in different ways. Bass and Avolio (1994) noted that leadership styles are strongly linked to organizational success. Bass and Avolio concluded that transformational leadership is the most encouraging leadership style. This leadership approach stimulates the individuals intellectually and helps individuals to push to be more successful in their individual roles. This type of leadership style inspires followers to achieve specific goals. Many researchers acknowledge that the development and effectiveness of leadership remains a mystery (Adler, 1997). Research results indicated that young women are directed by society, academic counselors, as well as family traditions toward traditional feminine careers rather than higher paying careers and pathways to leadership positions (American Association of University Women [AAUW], 2014).

Leadership and education. Leadership development resulting from education has differed over time. Throughout the history of leadership studies, there have been many theories as to how leaders developed and emerged (Meers, 2009). Northouse (2007) reported that existing research on leadership highlights that traits of leadership are learned through examples shown by other leaders, as well as through education. Northouse discussed different leadership theories and the characteristics that define them. Thoughts on mentoring and education were also reviewed and the influence the thoughts have on leadership traits. According to Villasana, Alcaraz-Rodríguez, and Alvarez (2016), having an entrepreneurial education can help aspiring entrepreneurs to develop and strengthen the skills and the behaviors needed that are identified as characteristic of successful entrepreneurs. The development of leadership is an ongoing process and ever growing (Komolthiti, 2016).

Leadership traits and development were also explored through former research. Rosser (2001) researched leaders to determine how leaders develop traits related to leadership. Rosser's (2001) research indicated the common belief that people are born with leadership traits, which was shown to be related to education. Rosser (2001) challenged the thought of learning to become a leader by highlighting the various ways an individual can expand education regarding the relationship between gender and leadership. While it has been said that humans are born with specific leadership traits, it is also true that one can choose to educate himself with different skills that are important.

Various factors influence leadership and the way in which it is implemented amongst women; this could include education, innovation, beliefs, and experiences. Education and leadership have been a topic of research for quite some time. Researchers have reported that there is a correlation between high-quality leadership and education (Jang, 2013). For example, Jang (2013) discussed the impact that higher education has on women in leadership roles indicating that the higher level of education a person has, the more likely they are to be placed in a leadership role. Jang (2013) helped to bring awareness to the relationship between education and leadership by reporting that education helps to provide individuals with the skills they need to be successful within their leadership roles.

Past scholars that have completed research related to leadership were seeking to understand how leaders develop and learn. In the middle of the 20th century, there was an increased awareness of the importance of leadership and, consequently, interest in the training and development of leaders came about. Garrison-Wade, Sobel, and Fulmer (2007) observed that, at that time, leaders were led by example. Leadership was viewed as a group of transferable skills or behaviors. With all the qualifications (e.g., possessing various characteristics) to be a

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leader, there are also many responsibilities (e.g., being an example for the followers) that come with being a leader. Many leaders have double roles: the leaders must be educational leaders and at the same time the leaders must act as managers of large complex organizations (McDade & Lewis, 1994).

Willingness to learn is a characteristic of leaders and their education as learning combines the logical along with the intuitive. Significant learning also combines the feelings, the concept along with the experience, and the idea and the meaning (Rogers & Freiberg, 1994). Rogers (1983) discussed the learning experience and the aspects of lives that are involved with the learning process. Personal involvement is self-initiated, meaning that sense of discovery must come from within. Personal involvement is also pervasive which includes that learning makes a difference in the behavior, the attitudes, perhaps even the personality of the learner. In addition, the learner evaluates personal involvement. This is anywhere the learner can best determine whether the experience is meeting a need. Lastly, self-involvement in its essence has meaning where the learner becomes incorporated into the entire experience (Rogers, 1983).

There are different ways that leaders can learn including personal experience and academic learning. Metheney-Fisher (2012) revealed through surveys and interviews that learning through experience is by far the most important way that leaders are learning to lead. According to Metheney-Fisher, across the world, people have recognized the desire for leaders to make a positive impact to help change the world.   Part of leadership development includes experiences along with education. Leadership development includes many activities and experiences, such as being a mentor, making a difference, and bringing awareness to important concepts. Leadership development can enhance the ability of individuals to make a difference, to shape the direction of their institution or organization, and to bring others along in sharing as

well as implementing goals. Leadership development is identifying new leaders, providing people with opportunities to grow and learn, as well as affirming beliefs and values, expanding understanding of issues and people, and improving leadership skills.

Leadership development was the focus of a great deal of speculation and the research from a training standpoint, yet very little research has been reviewed on the importance that life events play in leadership development (Meers, 2009). Meers indicated that leadership styles could have possibly been developed by life events. Meers also observed that placing leaders in experiential situations was beneficial. This is an example of a way that leadership can be developed through real-life events. Meers went on to report that leadership skills are tested, and this allows leaders to practice and strengthen skills. The dynamics of leadership education, learning through example and development has been the way in which the majority of leadership learning takes place.

Success and leadership. Success is an important component regarding leadership and entrepreneurship. A single article cannot focus on every issue or every part of leadership or entrepreneurship (Walker, 2013). A scientific formula to success does not exist (Kaluyu, 2015). According to Walker, very little former research had been conducted on understanding women, their views, and approaches to leadership. Schulman (2014) observed that entrepreneurs have creative approaches to success, making entrepreneurs unique. Women often adopt strategies that have a positive impact on their overall business success (Ewere, Adu, & Ibrahim, 2017). The strategies that were expressed were common amongst the participants and consisted of setting an example and being consistent.

For the most part, men and women define success very differently and former research has studied the differences that exist. Dyke and Murphy (2006) explored how women and men

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define success and how the definition of success affects career progress. The researchers found that men define success with more materialistic matters while women focus more on the relationship aspect. Dyke and Murphy found that gender differences regarding the meaning of success do indeed exist even when occupational attainments are similar.

One key point throughout previous research is that men and women view success differently (Dyke & Murphy, 2006). Dyke and Murphy related that most of the former research on success has been focused mainly on outside measures of success, such as salary. Money is what society often uses as a measure of success as well. There is an increase in the amount of research that highlights the importance of understanding internal success, such as satisfaction with the individual's business and their role. Batura, Skordis-Worrall, Thapa, Basnyat, and Morrison (2016) used a job satisfaction survey tool to collect qualitative data regarding the factors contributing to job satisfaction. The specific job satisfaction tool used a survey to better understand satisfaction with a job or with career progress as measures of subjective success. The authors reported that success was not the same for every individual. Defining success looked differently for each individual participant.

Additionally, environmental and organizational factors play a role in determining the success of organizations, which includes the adoption of entrepreneurial strategies (Roupas, 2008). Roupas (2008) indicated that some of the main behaviors that are typically displayed by entrepreneurial individuals include the desire to win, a high level of confidence, as well as the absence of risk aversion. Coincidentally, these are characteristics that fit many male leaders. It is not all-inclusive, but these highlight the most common characteristics of leaders.

According to Sajilan, Hadi, and Tehseen (2015), people with a need for achievement refers to people who want to be high achievers and because of this, have a strong desire for

success. Aiming for high achievements appears to be a trait that increases success amongst entrepreneurs (Sajilan et al., 2015). These are the individuals that work to become high achievers knowing it is linked with success. These individuals always strive to get the best results and to seek improvements in their actions for the outstanding outcomes the individuals are aiming for. Sajilan et al. found that a correlation exists between a need to reach success and growth in an organization.

Being persistent plays a major part in success as it relates to entrepreneurship and leadership. Gompers, Kovner, Lerner, and Scharfstein (2010) presented research to discuss what is related to performance persistence. The researchers defined success as going public. Success has two different components. According to Gompers et al., the first factor is labeled ''market timing skill,'' and is the component of success that comes from starting a company at an opportune time and place, i.e., in an industry and year in which success rates for other entrepreneurs were high. The second factor is determined by the entrepreneur's ability to manage the idea or venture. Gompers et al. found that increasing performance persistence increased success. Women can work to be persistent with their approach and, as a result, increase their overall success.

For women, success was focused on the personal idea of balance, and high importance was placed on their relationships. For men, material success still was a huge part of success, although other themes did emerge (Dyke & Murphy, 2006). Dyke and Murphy (2006) reported that success is a multifaceted term. There are many levels and conditions as it relates to success, and it can continue to expand depending on the individual or the circumstances. Dyke and Murphy determined how men and women define their success and the effect that it has on their career progression.

The beliefs and attitudes of women in leadership roles vary. According to Bullough (2008), attitudes are less positive toward women leaders, making it more difficult for women to become leaders and making it difficult to achieve success in leadership roles. Women who are leaders are expected to display feminine values by acting affectionate, cooperative, and compassionate. According to Bullough, women are not supposed to exhibit the characteristics typically associated with men and leaders such as being assertive, ambitious, dominant, strong, independent, and self-confident. The beliefs and attitudes of women in leadership roles vary and are unique specifically to being a woman.

Leadership and success have been researched to determine their relationship. Jones (2014a) specifically studied leadership style and the impact on success. Jones used a pre-existing career inventory to gauge success. "A Career Success Index composed of time in industry and position, job, and work/life balance satisfaction, and compensation defines career success for purposes of this study" (Jones, 2014a, p. 5). In addition, "The Multifactor Leadership Questionnaire (MLQ) survey was the chosen instrument to measure leadership style of the study subjects because of acceptable levels of reliability and validity" (Jones, 2014a, p. 5). The study used a quantitative approach to reduce bias and the researcher found that leadership behavior along with style helped contribute to having a successful career.

The studies on women business owners are minimal. Howard (2010) reviewed how research studies about women business owners or women entrepreneurs are limited, and previous research has focused on gender differences of business owners, traits of entrepreneurs, and reasons for and success of entrepreneurship. The study followed women to get information about lifelong experiences that the women had and the way the experiences impacted their business. Howard compared the various traits of entrepreneurs and found that a woman's success

in her specific endeavor involves her total being, and what surrounds her in her environment; this highlights that women do not just compartmentalize their leadership role but involve it with every area of their life: personal, social, and physical.

Gender does play a role in leadership opportunities for both men and women. Janus (2008) discussed how gender impacts leadership opportunities. Janus reported that 20% of women are in top leadership roles in major agencies. The study highlighted the issue of gender and leadership in public relations. Janus (2008) concluded that there needs to be a shift toward those women who are leaders, examining the factors that make them successful. Janus explored how gender affects leadership within the public relations realm. Twelve interviews were completed, and; the results reported that many factors of the employee's overall social location (class and race) take over gender when it comes to leadership styles.

Researcher's highlighted that women do not necessarily need to possess the same leadership competencies as men leaders, tending to focus more on tasks while men tend to focus more on strategy (Vaccaro, 2011). Vaccaro focused on higher education women administrators and the sisterhood amongst women. Narratives of eight women faculty, which included middle managers, and the top administrators, revealed that organizational sexism made sisterhood difficult. The women in these roles were reviewed on traits that they possessed in their leadership and how it played a part in their success. The study found that sisterhood was not easily achieved amongst the women who were studied.

Women's effectiveness in relation to leadership is important to understand. Rosser (2001) completed research on women and their effectiveness, which impacted their success, as it relates to leadership. The study went in-depth on the concepts that make deans effective and successful overall. Rosser stated, "The literature and research on leadership continue to produce

ambiguous and conflicting results regarding the relationship between gender and leadership" (p. 5). Waite (2014) and Rosser (2001) discussed the disparities amongst common literature between men and women. The research highlights that men differ in the characteristics related to their leadership styles with consequent, different outcomes of success; both studies also confirmed that a woman in leadership is a difficult concept to thoroughly understand without further research. According to Rosser (2001), with an increase in women holding leadership roles, research is expanding to better understand leadership style and characteristics of women specifically.

There are many types of leadership, but the differences regarding how they are implemented can sometimes be minuscule (Jonsen et al., 2010). Jonsen et al. (2010) discussed that there is no major difference in the leadership styles (transformational leadership, democratic, autocratic, and servant), approaches or effectiveness of women and men who hold leadership positions. However, there are different views and disagreements in literature and it is important to draw the correlation between leadership type and success amongst women entrepreneurs. Jonsen et al. completed a study on the relationship that exists between gender and leadership, exploring the effects of gender stereotyping. Jonsen et al. concluded that, since more women were in leadership positions, further research needs to be completed.

Most studies are focused on a small subset of the population. Bullough (2008) sought to further understand the forces hindering women from advancing into business or political leadership, as this is one contributing factor to identifying if women are successful. According to Bullough, "There is little research on women leaders using a multilevel, cross-cultural perspective, and very few studies propose theory that is applicable outside the samples or settings being investigated" (p. 3). The study expanded outward since most women's roles in

leadership apply to a multitude of settings and contexts. According to Bullough (2008), leaders are nurturing, inclusive, assertive, decisive, supporting, and competitive all at the same time. Leaders may possess some or are these all these characteristics depending on the circumstance. "Results indicate that the factors that affect women's participation in leadership in countries with fewer women leaders are different from the factors that affect women's participation in countries with high levels of participation" (Bullough, 2008, p. 1).

Leadership is not only limited to specific genders or ethnicities, as differences exist in expectations of men and women in leadership roles (Onorato, 2010). This highlights that there are two different schools of thought regarding leadership and success. Kotter (1990) argued, "Effective leadership coupled with competent management can produce extraordinary business successes" (p. 19). The two overlap and increase success in businesses. Kotter stated that "each of these holds a distinct difference in terms of their primary function. Leadership's primary function can produce useful change, and management can create orderly results which keeps something working efficiently" (p. 7). Leadership is a complex concept and becomes more challenging when adding other concepts such as gender or success. There can still be success within leadership, but the other concepts must be incorporated effectively. Success and leadership can be related (Kotter, 1990). Although there is a lot of research on the topic, there is still a disparity in the literature as to what success is exactly and the relationship that it has to women in leadership. There are many contributing factors, but without further research, no one factor could be solidified as linking success and leadership.

Barriers for women in leadership. Women entrepreneurship, as a new branch of entrepreneurship, needs a comprehensive review of strategies, methods, and techniques used in this sub-field (Rosser, 2001). Le Blanc (1994) described barriers for women as "those factors,

which circumvent or inhibit their entry into jobs, occupations, and organizations. Barriers are seen in the face of inequity" (p. 42). Le Blanc proposed including self-esteem, an internal barrier, and the need for self-improvement, limited external interactions, motherhood or family, the need for mentoring, and loneliness. Historically these barriers were overlooked, but to make changes regarding the thoughts about women entrepreneurship, these barriers must be recognized and adjusted (Le Blanc, 1994).

One major barrier for women is the glass ceiling. According to Pflanz (2011), research on women and leadership has focused consistently on the concept of the glass ceiling. Attaining the leadership role in any business is not an easy achievement for women. Overall, women leadership positions in higher education are currently at 26% versus men at 74% (Cook & Kim, 2012). According to Johnson (2015), "The proverbial glass ceiling has appeared to have reached new heights, with women continuously failing to slide up the reigns and grab what they have strived to obtain academically in comparison to their male counterparts" (p. 18). Women face the challenge of responding to the stereotyped expectations of the male leadership characteristics. This challenges women by causing them to attempt to fit a leadership mold and avoid their true leadership competencies. The cultural stereotypes can also lead to a double-bind experience for women leaders.

The glass ceiling is a commonly discussed concept due to the expectation to exhibit a women gender role while at the same time to exhibit the inherent male leadership role (Eagly & Carli, 2003a). Researchers found that often women leader actions and decision making in the corporate setting, academia, and the military are criticized using negative stereotypical gender traits, such as emotions (Eagly & Carli, 2003b). Eagly and Carli (2003b) stated that in complex situations, which are "real-world problems, people rely on stereotypes to evaluate performance"

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(p. 113). The issue persists that men continue to have a greater presence in the leadership roles, garner higher wages than women do, and exact more authority in the workplace (Eagly & Carli, 2003b).

Komolthiti (2016) interviewed 14 women superintendents about their experience in a leadership role. While the women all identified various experiences with discrimination, they were able to identify why they were involved with the current role. According to Komolthiti, positions and career development are ever growing. The findings showed that the women who participated had many changes in their careers. Along with career changes came new experiences, which in turn shaped their current approaches within the new role. This particular position was one in which they all related to having internal motivation to work diligently in their current role. According to Crockett (2017), the biases that exist toward women in current leadership roles could potentially lead women to adopt more situational, flexible, and varied leadership styles, therefore potentially increasing effectiveness.

Previous studies regarding women in leadership were limited as the studies were mainly related to gender differences (Bullough, 2008; Flood, 2007). According to Bullough (2008), previous leadership studies focused on the fact that there are indeed beliefs about gender as well as entrepreneurship and leaders need to explore the role played in determining who becomes an entrepreneur and who does not. One limitation of the Bullough research was that education seemed to be the main factor taken into consideration when determining what leads to success as an entrepreneur. While education is found to be related to leadership success, it is objective regarding if it should be the main factor as it relates to leadership.

There is also a barrier that women face in leadership titled the labyrinth. Rabas (2013) discussed the concept of the labyrinth in-depth and observed that the labyrinth idea highlights the

concept that the barrier is not necessarily impenetrable, but rather it is seen as more "permeable." Although the barrier is seen as permeable, it still requires a significant navigation. The metaphor, as it relates to the workplace, suggests that the women as leaders must still navigate difficult challenges along the way to leadership positions. Women leaders, like their male counterpart leaders, have invested time as well as money into education and training for leadership (Rabas, 2013). Due to this investment, these women do not want to throw the opportunity away. According to Rabas, it is extremely important to understand the barriers as well as the fears that impact women's role to provide the support and opportunities necessary to advance and enhance the experiences of women as leaders.

Women are underrepresented in leadership roles, despite their participation in higher education, their prominence in the workplace, and their investment in human capital (Hoeritz, 2013). This underrepresentation becomes a barrier as it can make it challenging for women attempting these roles. According to Hoeritz (2013), women earned more undergraduate and master's degrees than men since 2002, when counting only U.S. citizens; women have also earned most Doctorate degrees. Despite these high levels of college participation by women, their presence is not shown when researching leadership. Higher education does not remove the barriers in place that exist for women.

Hoeritz (2013) shared that "there is no real evidence of differences in cognitive abilities or even personality traits between men and women, but unfortunately the stereotypes are still prevalent and continue to impact the treatment of women" (p. 25). More recent studies focused on leadership styles, the context of leadership, and career progression. Although current research indicates women can lead effectively, stereotypes and challenges exist that may impede the success of women leaders. Women leadership is most commonly defined by the differences

between femininity and masculinity. The concept of the glass ceiling has affected women for decades and continues to persist. Hoeritz indicated that women's contributions and experiences should be incorporated into the fiber of how organizations determine priorities and execute responsibilities.

There are many prejudices related to women in leadership. One major prejudice is the idea that women do not possess the needed characteristics to be an effective leader (Fondas, 1997). In a study completed by Eagly and Karau (2002), the researchers found that the behavior and characteristics of men versus women as leaders varies and those differences can be looked upon poorly by other leaders. The characteristics that male leaders possess are viewed as better or more effective. Eagly and Karau also found that there is prejudice as it relates to women leaders or potential women leaders. The results of this study displayed that stereotyping contributes to the lack of women in leadership positions as well as their prominence in stereotypically feminine roles (Eagly & Karau, 2002). Eagly and Karau presented the idea that attitudes toward women leaders are less favorable than men.

The self-perceptions of business owners have also been researched. Perreault (2014) completed a study to reflect on self-perceptions of small business owners and their leadership style along with organizational success. Perreault found that the specific problem of poor management along with poor leadership skills contributed to small business failure and closure. This confirms that leadership does play some role regarding success. The researcher found that women would benefit from better understanding the relationship between their style of leadership and organizational success. The lack of self-perception was a barrier. Perreault highlighted this due to the poor management skills being related to women understanding their

leadership styles. Without a thorough understanding of leadership style an individual leader uses, it is likely that the skills that are implemented could potentially be poor.

Lack of motivation or stress could be considered barriers for women. Arora (2014) used a questionnaire given to entrepreneurs to discover their motivation. The study explored what motivated women the most and why. Arora highlighted that women entrepreneurs are much higher on dependence, work group relation, intrinsic motivation, along with material incentives than that of their male counterparts. These are said to be the traits and factors that motivate women. Arora also found that women are focused more on relationships instead of things. These traits played a large role in the overall success of women leaders. Arora offered that when women assign meaning to their work, their motivation increases their stress. According to Arora, it is common for women to place meaning as a priority within their leadership roles in relation to success; however, the study had a small sample size, so the findings may not be generalizable.

Many studies have helped to determine the factors that contribute to motivating women in their work. Podjasek (2009) explored how women increase productivity based on their view of leadership. The qualitative study explored participant women voices through interviews to further determine how women teacher leaders view leadership. The study was initiated because it was found that women's experiences with leadership have been ignored. The idea that women and their experiences regarding leadership have been ignored was a barrier to understanding how women leaders determine success. The view women have regarding leadership actually determines how successful they will be in their businesses. Podjasek highlighted that the body of research on women teaching has identified a lack of scholarly attention toward the contribution of women.

Women leaders who are aloof or are directive, or who are too task focused and, therefore, do not project warmth, are perceived as confident (Wright, 2011). Wright's (2011) main finding was that leaders must take risks. Wright also observed that women are often overly modest about their abilities and men overestimate theirs, which causes women to be self-critical. This can also be a barrier to women's entrepreneurial success as it relates to their leadership. Wright indicated the impact that these negative traits have on leadership in general. Since there are many barriers women face regarding leadership, as well as an increase in women as leaders, it is imperative to further the research on women as leaders.

Innovation and leadership. Leadership has been said to be an important factor impacting innovation and creativity. Leadership is becoming more prevalent as it relates to various careers. According to Jang (2013), leadership is increasing more in various career clusters. To be innovative, leaders must possess creative thinking skills. To be innovative is not sufficient; to be creative and produce new possibilities and ideas, implementation is a key aspect of the innovation process (Northouse, 2007).

According to Gumusluoğlu and Ilsev (2009), several past studies have shown that transformational leadership positively influences organizational innovation. Gumusluoğlu and Ilsev reported that transformational leadership is an important determinant of organizational innovation and encourages managers to engage in transformational leadership behaviors to promote organizational innovation. The researchers found that outside support was more impactful in boosting innovation. Leadership, therefore, provides the support needed for followers in order to increase innovation and effectiveness. The transformational leadership approach is innovative by nature (Gumusluoğlu & Ilsev, 2009).

Choosing a career path is a personal decision and can also be directly related to an individual's creativity and personal skills. Schoon and Duckworth (2012) discussed how young people make career choices by the way they were socialized along with characteristics such as personal creativity and innovation. The researchers found that being innovative was directly related to career decisions made by individuals. Schoon and Duckworth (2012) and Jang (2013) reported a significant relationship between having an innovative transformational leadership style and the career success of women in nonprofit organizations.

The first studies of leadership introduced the great man theory which was concentrated on leadership as a capacity, stressing that leaders were born, not made (Bass, 1981). The great man theory is an idea that was coined in the 19th Century, which highlights leaders that are extremely influential due to their skill, creativity, or characteristics. Emerging literature is somewhat conflicting regarding leadership behaviors, the differing roles of women, and whether leadership could indeed be learned. This challenged a lot of researchers regarding leadership and education, including Jang (2013). The study by Jang was intended to increase literature of entrepreneurship education research by investigating the career path of student entrepreneurs during the early stages of the post-graduation period. This was important because the study showed that leading required more than innovation. The findings of this study showed that education can help with entrepreneurial information, but the results also indicated that entrepreneurship can be learned. Jang noted the importance of incorporating innovation into the entrepreneur roles. Entrepreneurship, while a complex concept to comprehend, can be taught and learned. Upon better understanding, entrepreneurship individuals are able to educate and expand on the concept within their unique role.

Transformational leadership is a new, innovative, and creative approach to leadership (Northouse, 2007). Jogulu and Wood (2006) found that leadership theories have helped women in positions of leadership. The authors explored ways in which women have also been hindered relating to their leadership roles. The researchers found that women seem to exhibit more transformational leadership traits (i.e., participative) than that of their male counterparts. The transactional and transformational leadership theories help to direct women with the approach that best suits them and help to apply the approach to their lives.

Gender is related to being offered a leadership position. Appelbaum et al. (2013) found that gender plays a role regarding receiving leadership positions. The researchers found that the most effective leadership style is transformational leadership. Appelbaum et al. noted that women leaders rate themselves higher in transformational leadership. They exemplify traits such as empathy, creativeness, and supportiveness along with relationship building. The researchers stated that this form of leadership has the greatest impact on the women whom they are leading as well as their overall success.

Transformational leadership involves an exceptional form of influence from the leader who inspired the follower to accomplish more (Northouse, 2007). Some studies specifically gauged transformational leadership and the positive impact on success for both the leader and the followers (Branche, 2014; Walker, 2013). Branche (2014) reported that Black women leaders that worked in non-profit organizations would show more of the transformational leadership characteristics than that of transactional leadership. The research expanded on many of the characteristics of transformational leaders such as serving others. The study had great insight, but Branche's study was limited to minority leaders.

Transformational leadership does have an impact on leaders and success rates (Walker, 2013). Walker (2013) found that the way women view their styles of leadership impacts the results of their success rates. The study by Walker identified how women use their characteristics and how these characteristics are utilized in their leadership approach. Walker found that women possess characteristics such as honesty and dependability. It is important to note that these characteristics are related to that of the transformational leadership approach. The study reviewed how women's views of their leadership can impact the outcome of the interviews or studies in which they participate.

Transformational leadership is a new form of leadership. Transformational leadership changes and transforms individuals (Northouse, 2004). Some traits of transformational leadership are the ability to motivate others and to be an exemplary example (Northouse, 2007). Walker (2013) highlighted how this leadership theory has increased success amongst leaders. Previous research had not gone in-depth to further understand approaching leadership with a transformational nature. This current study attempted to expand on the results that Walker (2013) found by highlighting the views of the success of women leaders with a transformational approach.

Fluid leadership is a form of leadership where an individual's leadership can change. Fluid leaders adjust their leadership to the individuals whom they are leading; therefore, their leadership style is not set in stone, but instead fluctuates at the leader sees fit. According to Thomas, Hebdon, Novicevic, and Hayek (2015), leaders are presented with the idea that developing a broad idea of leadership behaviors is essential to guiding followers effectively. The ability to adjust as the leader sees fit allows for more innovation within the role.

Review of Methodological Issues

Leadership studies focus on the impact leaders have on those whom they are leading along with their preferred leadership approach (Northouse, 2007). There are many studies and empirical research regarding this topic as well. Research that has been completed in the past generally supported the differences amongst leadership styles and the way in which leadership related to entrepreneurship. Much of the literature regarding leadership has used various forms of research such as textbooks, journal articles along with study methods and designs. It is important to study the topic using various methods to have a thorough understanding and to cross verify from two or more sources to assess commonalities. According to De La Rey (2005), the research regarding leadership is mostly used to further explore leadership and its components. The research also provides insight into problems that exist in the field of leadership.

Studying women specifically regarding entrepreneurship makes the current research more complex. Wright (2011) completed a survey study to get a better understanding of the way in which women entrepreneurs view their leadership style and how the style correlates with success. In the study, Wright found that certain leadership styles were related to more success. In a quantitative study, Perreault (2014) examined the relationship between leadership styles for woman-owned and led small businesses and organizational success. The instrument questions were used to gather data addressing the research questions. The questions were important to gauge self-perceived leadership styles and behaviors and another questionnaire for employee/rater description of the perceived leadership styles and behaviors of the leader. A Multifactor Leadership Questionnaire was used to "help measure key leadership behaviors and helped to show that there was a strong link to the individual and organizational success that came

from former research" (Perreault, 2014, p. 14). With leadership being a complex topic, it is important to study the concept in an effective manner.

Existing literature on women entrepreneurs has mostly been quantitative in nature. Former research has focused on comparisons and correlations as it relates to various leadership styles (Thébaud, 2010). Many studies relate gender and leadership styles to one another (Rosser, 2001; Thébaud, 2010). Results have shown that there is a correlation between transformational leadership and women. There is also a correlation between autocratic leadership and men. Former studies measured the quality of the leadership concept such a leadership styles and traits (De Bruin, Brush, & Welter, 2006; Wright, 2011).

Other studies have used a qualitative approach to further understand women in leadership more in-depth. However, women and success have not been thoroughly understood nor explained. The qualitative approach was beneficial for studies in that qualitative research helps to gain an understanding of the underlying reasons for the behavior or concept being studied. Having a better understanding of leadership styles and traits of leaders can best be studied through a qualitative lens allowing for the ability to uncover trends in opinions or beliefs (Birks, Chapman, & Francis, 2008).

One qualitative tool often used in research is interviewing. Wright (2011) used interviews to collect information regarding women as leaders. The study was limited to women in the psychotherapy realm and not necessarily all women leaders. Wright concluded that "Women in leadership positions need to be willing to seize the moment and take risks. They should expect criticism and know that they may be scrutinized more vigorously than male counterparts" (p. 252). The study also concluded that having a feminine leadership style had some benefits such as being task focused. The limitation of the study was that the women had to

be within a certain career field, which limited the application of the outcome to all women leaders.

Similarly, a study by De Bruin et al. (2006) was drawn from a pre-existing framework titled the 3M's. The 3M's are markets, money, and management, which are the three concepts women, need to start an entrepreneurial launch or venture. The limitation of the study was that an old framework was used rather than a new one being developed. The framework that was used may no longer apply in current leadership, and therefore, should be updated to reflect more recent findings. The findings of this study resulted in the fact that women are one of the fastest growing populations of entrepreneurs and make a significant contribution to innovation and wealth economies all around the world (De Bruin et al., 2006). This result has been indicative of the need for more research regarding women in leadership roles.

Using the qualitative method is beneficial as it allows the researcher to further research the way people experience situations. These former studies referenced leadership style along with gender comparisons. The research regarding women entrepreneurs has focused on many different topics in the leadership category including growth, education, cultural identity, patterns, and gender differences. The methodological issue in former research is that most of it focused on men in leadership and had little information on leadership as it relates to women. The researchers highlighted characteristics where men were viewed as better leaders due to their gender (Thébaud, 2010). These studies did not expand to highlight women's strength. Rosser (2001) went on to challenge this common misconception. The former research discussed how leadership amongst women was rare and has now increased. Former research discussed the background and common traits amongst women leaders. Lastly, former research focused on men in a leadership role and what makes them different from their women counterparts.

There are numerous approaches to researching women leaders. Many former studies referenced used a qualitative approach, which signifies that this approach can be used successfully as it relates to leadership and women. De Bruin et al. (2006) reviewed the top eight peer-reviewed entrepreneurship journals and discovered an assumption exists that there is no need to study women entrepreneurs separately from men entrepreneurs. The qualitative research method used in leadership studies allows researchers to gain more insight into the leadership concept. Qualitative research is exploratory by nature (Bryman, 2004). Contrary to former research lacking detail about women as leaders, understanding women entrepreneurs is important (Rosser, 2001). Prior leadership research focused on men in leadership; therefore, it is important for future studies to explore leadership from a women-centered focus.

With the increased number of women entrepreneurs, it is important to learn more about the concept. Bulanova, Isaksen, and Kolvereid (2016) conducted a mixed-method study in which they reviewed the growth of women in entrepreneurial roles; the women participants stated that they only wanted their business to grow if it did not impact the quality of services they offered. Women historically have placed others above their own business success. Chao (2002) found that women were not being recognized for their entrepreneurship contributions. Chao highlighted the economic prosperity of women entrepreneurs using a qualitative approach. Chao discussed the benefit of taking advantage of the small business administration programs from the perspective of participants. According to Chao, the growth of women who are entrepreneurs in the United States has been substantial recently. Currently, there are 6,200,000 women-owned firms employing about 9,200,000 people and generating sales of $1.15 trillion in the United States. Even outside of the United States, women are making impacts. As Chao stated, "Women are shaping and redefining the workplace, the nation's business networks, financial institutions,

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and our culture. Perhaps most of all, women entrepreneurs are deeply influencing how the business community, public officials, and the media perceive and respond to women" (p. 3).

There has been a paradigm shift regarding women and leadership, with more women leaders emerging. Unfortunately, according to Flood (2007), there is a scarcity of research on the developmental needs of women in leadership roles. More recent research has included women but should continue to expand upon this. According to Rosser (2001), the literature and former research on leadership continue to produce unclear and conflicting results regarding the relationship between gender and leadership. Rosser expanded beyond gender comparisons as it relates to leadership. By interviewing successful women entrepreneurs, the researcher was able to in turn gain a greater understanding of the most common factors that successful women entrepreneurs possess (Rosser, 2001). Rosser indicated that most of the women grew up with women who had strong personalities and a lot of responsibilities. The researcher was also able to obtain the perceived importance in relation to success, and how the characteristics are used within the business. Similarly, Rieger (2012) stated that "Conducting qualitative research, through interviews, provided a definition of the unique individual experiences, exploring each entrepreneur's view of what made her successful" (p. 12).

Many qualitative and quantitative studies have been conducted regarding leadership. Bass and Avolio (1994) studied the development of transformational leaders. In the study, Bass and Avolio used a quantitative method to determine if there was a correlation between transformational leader behaviors and certain experiences, such as the glass-ceiling phenomenon. Bass and Avolio did not find overwhelmingly strong correlations between the life experiences and the development of transformational leadership skills. The study provided background for new studies regarding the development of leadership.

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Cultural beliefs about gender and entrepreneurship play an important role in determining who becomes an entrepreneur and who does not (Thébaud, 2010). However, the correlation has been made between the characteristics of leaders and entrepreneurs, but the research is limited (Thébaud, 2010). Theories about transformational and charismatic leadership suggest that there is a significant relationship that exists between leadership, organizational change, and entrepreneurship (Northouse, 2007); this aligns with the current dissertation regarding the relationship between entrepreneurial success and leadership style.

In another study, Sylvie, Muser, and Janneck (2012) interviewed over 1,100 men and women. The participants were questioned regarding their leader's behavior, along with their work engagement, and occupational success. Results highlighted a significant positive correlation between transformational leadership, work engagement, and subjective occupational success for men and women. Much of the former research did not study the correlation between leadership style and entrepreneurial success. The findings from Sylvie et al. (2012) advanced the understanding of how leaders can enhance employee occupational success.

As with any form of research, the studies highlighted had limitations regarding what could be studied or what could have been learned. Walker (2013) studied leadership from a woman's perspective using a qualitative study; there was a chance that the researcher's bias threatened the evaluation. Canals (2014) studied leadership in a broad perspective, therefore the broad research may have been a limitation for the results of the study (Patterson, Mavin, & Turner, 2012). For each individual study, leadership was assessed differently because, as Adler (1997) noted, the definition of leadership cannot be considered historically agreed-upon.

Using semi-structured interviews is a technique often used in qualitative research. Reynolds, Carter, Gartner, Greene, and Cox (2002) used a qualitative approach with semi-structured, in-person interviews to interview seven women university leaders and to compare their experiences as leaders in private, nonprofit universities in the United States. The study documented their experiences and perceptions as leaders. The interviews allowed the participants to be open with sharing information with the researcher in order to help the researcher gain more insight into their experiences. The participants reported that their leadership experiences had commonalities across the board. The participants discussed work-life balance and troubles with stereotypes in leadership roles. Similar to Reynolds et al. (2002), the current study used semi-structured interviews to allow women to compare their experiences and to allow further exploration and documentation of their experiences.

Due to women in leadership and women entrepreneurs being a topic less researched, using a phenomenological approach was appropriate to gain better insight into the topic (Coyle & Ellinger, 2001). This conclusion was drawn from previous research. In a review of successful women, Rieger (2012) used a qualitative approach to understand the characteristics of successful women. Rieger defined the women as successful if they owned and operated a business for at least two years and met a financial or non-financial goal. The study targeted participants who were successful women entrepreneurs had first-hand knowledge of being a successful woman entrepreneur and were willing to share the journey to success (Rieger, 2012). According to Rieger, a unique semi-structured interview questionnaire was used to conduct personal interviews. Rosser used the qualitative analysis to condense the information, identify patterns, and to populate a matrix that would visually display the information the data exposed to determine the development of patterns and themes. The researcher started with general questions

and then advanced to questions related to the topic of success. The outcome of the study was informative for women who want to become successful in maintaining or starting a business.

There are several advantages to using the qualitative method for exploratory research, which would include obtaining observations, perceptions, as well as self-perceptions from the interview participants (Glesne & Peshkin, 1992). Qualitative methods into the study of leadership could possibly improve the research on leadership by facilitating the introduction of a wider range of contextual variables into the investigation of leadership styles (Bryman, Bresnan, Beardsworth, & Keil, 1988). Bryman (2004) observed that using a qualitative approach for research regarding certain topics of leadership, such as the role of leaders in the change process, has had major contributions to the field. The research on leadership has been dominated by a single kind of data gathering instrument—the self-administered questionnaire that yields to using a qualitative approach (Bryman, 2004).

Synthesis of Research Findings

In this chapter, the researcher included several resources that defined and overviewed leadership, entrepreneurship, and success (Northouse, 2007; Still et al., 2005). Overall, research has been conducted related to leadership on topics such as leadership styles and gender differences. The various types of leadership have drawn attention to the research world (Northouse, 2007). There has also been some research regarding entrepreneurship (Kobia & Sikalieh, 2010). Together, the two terms are linked to success, but very little research has been completed regarding the relationship (Pflanz, 2011). The current study investigated the lived experiences and views that women have regarding their leadership and entrepreneurial experiences. The literature indicated that entrepreneurship success is, in part, related to a leadership approach (Jensen & Luthans, 2006).

Men and women leaders differ regarding the characteristics they possess that make them successful leaders (Pflanz, 2011). The role of women is often overlooked in academic research (Howard, 2010). Presently and increasingly, women are in positions of leadership and there has been a paradigm shift in these positions. With more women being in leadership roles and owning more businesses, the need for further research has increased. Upon reviewing previous research, most focused on gender comparisons and the varying characteristics (Perreault, 2014). The concept of women being compared to men inspired the researcher to examine reviews of the literature to see what had been studied thus far and to potentially change the direction of the future research.

Further empirical research may strongly contribute to the increased amount of leadership literature and could significantly advance knowledge of women in leadership, and successful approaches to leadership (Parker & Van-Praag, 2010). There were gaps in the literature regarding the impact of success on women entrepreneurial leaders. The gaps in literature are due to fact that women leadership was not a concept studied in-depth (Parker & Van-Praag, 2010). The themes that were found throughout this research were focused mainly on gender comparisons, not on women alone (Parker & Van-Praag, 2010). This current dissertation yielded new information regarding leadership, entrepreneurship, and success for women. Leadership is a critical term when considering entrepreneurial success (Flood, 2007). It is imperative for future studies to consider how leadership styles can have an impact on success in the entrepreneurial realm. This can be done by researching patterns, commonalities, and experiences.

Much has been studied regarding leadership in general. One well-known idea is that leaders must be resilient. Women in leadership positions should be willing to take risks. The idea that risk-taking is now important was not always thought to be true (Wright, 2011).

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Women, in turn, need to remember that the feminine style may have advantages that should be honored (Wright, 2011). These are characteristics that exemplify transformational leadership. Cheryl de la Rey (2005) highlighted that since more women are in leadership roles, it is important to continue to expand the research. De la Rey (2005) confirmed that women are still underrepresented in positions of power, responsibility, and leadership, despite the dramatic increase in their formal employment over the last fifty years. The results of this misrepresentation may be due to discrimination and stereotyping. De la Rey discussed how leadership-training programs have contributed to the increase in the number of women in leadership positions. Recent research has shown that women have and continue to make progress toward leadership positions, creating a need for more research.

Critique of Previous Research

Research regarding entrepreneurship, leadership, and success independently exists. The purpose of the former qualitative research regarding entrepreneur studies was to further explore the lived experiences of successful women entrepreneurs (Bryman, 2004; Creswell, 1998; Dyke & Murphy, 2006). The purpose was also to further understand individual perceptions of the personal characteristics each women leader was perceived to possess. According to Parker and Van-Praag (2010), the past research assisted in understanding what characteristics enabled women to become successful entrepreneurs. Additional research is needed to explore the factors as they relate to entrepreneurship (Parker & Van-Praag, 2010).

Arora (2014) reported that work worth, responsibility, recognition, and freedom motivate entrepreneurs. The motivational factors are tied to the success of entrepreneurs. Arora indicated the importance of motivation and how it related to success. Sylvie et al. (2012) highlighted the relationship that exists between transformational leadership, work engagement, and occupational

success, all supported by highly significant, positive correlations, meaning these concepts are all related to one another.

The purpose of the previous research was to explore the lived experiences of successful women entrepreneurs, to understand the individual perceptions of the phenomena, and to increase the understanding of the experiences of others (Coyle & Ellinger, 2001). Women-owned businesses are growing rapidly in the United States (U.S. Senate Committee on Small Business, 2017). Rosser (2001) confirmed that research results from previous studies produced ambiguous results because of gender differences. Therefore, it is important to expand beyond the previous studies. The current study used various factors to determine practical steps to increase success. The current study included how women entrepreneurs describe their leadership as well as how women entrepreneurs believe their leadership style plays a role in their success.

There were several attempts to define successful entrepreneurship in former research and the results produced several different definitions. Gompers et al.'s (2010) research attempted to find the contributing factors to performance persistence in entrepreneurship and how it impacted success. To better understand performance persistence, the researchers had to identify the best definition of entrepreneurship. Gompers et al. defined success as going public or filing to go public, while many other studies have adopted a general definition for success, without highlighting the difficulty in pinning it down. It is evident that this term can be defined differently for many people.

Dyke and Murphy (2006) highlighted that women view success as having balance in their relationships. An alternative definition of business success is that the longer an employee can survive and prevent involuntary exit, the more successful the business will be (Parker & Van-Praag, 2010). This definition seemed to be closely aligned with success as deemed by

participants in several studies. Still et al. (2005) agreed that success could be defined as personal satisfaction and/or performance measures. This definition summed up all the issues that people had with definitions not aligning with individual values.

Some entrepreneurs suggested that success was earning a living or having a satisfactory income, while others believed success was customer satisfaction and respect (Reijonen & Komppula, 2007). This view of success was common amongst various studies including entrepreneurs. Subjective definitions of success were frequently as essential to the entrepreneur as were objective ones. Therefore, success may be measured by reaching both intrinsic and extrinsic goals (Kuratko, 2004). The beliefs around success have shifted throughout time. Researchers offer many definitions and the measurements of success vary among individual entrepreneurs (Bass, 1981). Many researchers had a bias when studying success and that bias often impacted the outcome. Most often, the way in which to measure success was determined through an individuals or businesses financial achievement (Dyke & Murphy, 2006). However, former studies show that success can be a multi-dimensional concept consisting of financial and nonfinancial factors (Walker & Brown, 2004).

The review of the literature regarding women entrepreneurs and success has established that more research is necessary to better understand the way women interpret success and the barriers that may prevent them from being successful. Adler (1997) noted that women's challenges in achieving career development and advancement to leadership positions appear to be consistent across most industries. The current research has attempted to expand on former studies to develop a better understanding of the way women view the success of their leadership and entrepreneurial roles.

Summary

For years, men have been more likely to be placed in leadership roles compared to women; however, a paradigm shift occurred in the 21st century, with the number of women in roles of leadership increasing. The leader focus shifted to understanding the relationship between a leader's actions and a follower's satisfaction and productivity (Bass, 1981). When more knowledge became available, the shift occurred. The Industrial Revolution shifted America's economy from an agriculture-based to an industrial-based economy and, thereby, ushered in a change in how leaders treated followers. The Industrial Revolution created a paradigm shift to a new theory of leadership in which "common" people gained power by their skills (Clawson, 1999).

There is a large amount of research on leadership as it relates to success, feminism, and entrepreneurship. The current review of leadership was used to explore and summarize the theories and opinions of many authors, along with many of the studies regarding the application, characteristics, and the effects of different leadership style, as well as the way success is defined. Transformational leadership, organizational leadership, and servant leadership were often discussed as key leadership approaches throughout the research reviewed. An appropriate leadership style influences performance, relationships, and career success (Jones, 2014a). Choice of leadership behavior and style are critical components in developing a successful career and the achievement of personal and professional objectives (Jacobson, Palus, & Bowling, 2015).

In the last decade, the view of success in leadership has changed drastically. Due to this, research has been very different as it has begun to focus more on women and the concepts related to women as leaders. Based on the former research regarding leadership styles, there is

sufficient reason for thinking that further research is needed to explore women and how leadership is viewed and implemented for them as well as the impact that it has on success.

Based on this review of the literature, which develops a unique conceptual framework using transformational, organization, and servant leadership to understand women's views of success, there is sufficient reason for thinking that an investigation examining leadership style and entrepreneurship as it relates to women and their lived experiences would yield socially significant findings. I can, therefore, claim that the literature review has provided strong support for pursuing a research project to answer the following multi-part research question; how do women entrepreneurs describe their leadership experiences as entrepreneurs; how do women entrepreneurs describe their success as entrepreneurs; and, from the perspective of women entrepreneurs, what impact does leadership style have on their entrepreneurial success?

Chapter 3: Methodology

Introduction

Women assuming leadership roles as an entrepreneur has become more prevalent in today's work environment (Parker & Van-Praag, 2010). The problem exists that there is limited research regarding women entrepreneurial leaders and their view of success. This qualitative phenomenological study explored how women entrepreneurs describe and interpret their leadership experiences, how they describe their entrepreneurial success, and the perceived impact leadership style has on their overall success. This research attempted to minimize research gaps and increase awareness of the dynamic of women's leadership styles and experience and success. The literature review demonstrated that leadership style was related to entrepreneurial success. Due to limited research, the researcher implemented a qualitative phenomenological research approach (McElwee & Al-Riyami, 2003). This chapter provides a detailed outline of the qualitative design and research methods, by describing the study in-depth regarding how it was conducted and the results. This chapter also highlights the research design, data collection, as well as procedures to answer the highlighted research questions. A qualitative method was used to have women entrepreneurs share their impression of the way in which a leadership style influences their success.

Research Questions

Research begins with the identification of research questions; research questions provided the primary direction and intent of the research (Creswell, 1994). This dissertation explored the lived experiences, success, and leadership of women entrepreneurs. There were three research questions that guided this study.

The three exploratory questions that guided this study were:

Research question 1. How do women entrepreneurs describe their leadership experiences as entrepreneurs?

Research question 2. How do women entrepreneurs describe their success as entrepreneurs?

Research question 3. From the perspective of women entrepreneurs, what impact does leadership style have on their entrepreneurial success?

Purpose and Design of the Study

A qualitative phenomenological research design enabled exploration of the experiences and perceptions of women entrepreneurs. "Theories, such as interactionism, phenomenology, and critical theory can be used to help design a research question, guide the selection of relevant data, interpret the data, and propose explanations of causes or influences" (Reeves, Albert, & Hodges, 2008, p. 1). The first purpose of this study was to offer insight into the lived experiences of women entrepreneurs. Semi-structured interview questions revealed participant leadership experiences along with the perceived impact that leadership has had on their success, which helped reveal answers to the overall study questions.

Howard (2010) reported that, while women entrepreneurs own almost half of the privately held businesses in the United States, little is known or reported about the experiences of these women entrepreneurs. Previous research highlighted that leadership is a term that evolves over time (Northouse, 2007). Given the more recent research, it becomes apparent that more research was needed regarding women in leadership. Northouse (2007) reported that former research on leadership displayed that the traits of leadership are learned through examples shown by other leaders, and through education. The belief that leadership is learned through education

is conflicting with the common belief that leadership is an innate quality people are born with (Rosser, 2001).

The second purpose of this study was to better understand how women entrepreneurs describe their success. Many people understand and describe the term success differently. From this study, readers may gain an insight into the way in which women entrepreneurs view success. According to Northouse (2007), other research has focused on the entrepreneurial journey and aspects of individuals' lives that increased their success. Very few studies have discovered the relationship between a leadership style and the entrepreneurial success, particularly for women (Greene, Hart, Gatewood, Brush, & Carter, 2004).

The third purpose of this study was to determine if there is a perceived impact of leadership style on entrepreneurial success. In addition, the current study helped to clarify the patterns that exist amongst women entrepreneurs and their success. Since former research is limited, it was not well known how women entrepreneurs view leadership, or how women determine their entrepreneurial success and how they define their business success (Northouse, 2007).

To address the three research questions, a qualitative phenomenological method was chosen. As a research design, phenomenology is a way to study how individuals give different meanings to social phenomena in their everyday lives. Using a phenomenological research design allows the researcher to gain more insight into the thoughts and beliefs of participants.

With qualitative studies, there is an option to use other designs such as a narrative approach. According to Sauro (2014), the narrative approach puts a sequence of events, usually from one or two individuals together, to form a cohesive story. This is considered narrative inquiry, which was not used as the intention of this study was not to place the results in a story

format. Rather, this study aimed to explore common patterns from an entire population and needed data from more than merely a few participants; therefore, the phenomenon was explained not necessarily a sequence of events.

Ethnography is another option that is often used in qualitative research; this is where the researcher becomes immersed in the culture to learn more. According to Sauro (2014), when the researcher completes ethnographic research, the researcher becomes immersed in the target participants' environment to understand the goals, cultures, challenges, motivations, and themes that emerge, which was not the goal of the current study. Ethnography was not used because the women participants had both online and brick-and-mortar businesses and the current study was not focused on the cultural aspect regarding women entrepreneurial leaders. Using ethnography would have limited the researchers reach regarding the women who did participate in this study. Therefore, it was not plausible for the researcher to observe or interact with each participant in-depth outside of the hour-long session.

The design used in this study was a phenomenological approach. This study was conducted to explore women entrepreneurs, their view on leadership and their lived experiences, therefore phenomenological study was chosen to address this. McElwee and Al-Riyami (2003) noted that women's leadership is not studied often. For this study, the data collection methods used were open-ended questions, focus groups, and memoing. According to Creswell (1998), qualitative research methods that apply open-ended interviews allow the participants to share their perspective and to be more open in their responses. The qualitative method must listen to the meaning at the heart of their participants' stories, thoughts, and ideas to arrive at an understanding of the world as it is experienced by the participants (Rubin & Rubin, 1995).

In order to understand the lived experiences of study participants, open-ended interviews were used. Focus groups and memoing were also used to gauge the answers to the research questions. The researcher created and pilot-tested the open-ended questions for the current study. To gather data, each of the participants engaged in individual interviews along with a focus group. The researcher also completed memoing as a technique to gather data. Using these methods provided insight regarding the way in which women entrepreneurs describe their success as a business entrepreneur and the way in which women entrepreneurs describe their leadership experiences.

In this research, no experimental data was collected because the interviews took place from a perspective standpoint. There was no manipulation of variables and the research did not seek to see if there is a relationship (Creswell, 1994). The phenomenological design was utilized for this study as it helped to bring to the forefront the experience and perceptions of the women entrepreneurs from their own perspective, and therefore, challenged normative assumptions. In total, it took a total of three months to collect and analyze all the data.

With phenomenology, the reality is not fully known; however, individuals who give meaning to their various experiences construct it. Phenomenological research requires an attitude of wonder that is highly empathic. The researcher empathically joins with the participants ("co-performs" the participants' involvement) in their lived situation(s) (Wertz, 2005, p. 172). As a specific type of qualitative design, a phenomenological study provides a description of the lived experiences regarding a phenomenon for several individuals (Creswell, 1998). In addition, a phenomenological study allows the researcher to emphasize the personal meaning of a phenomenon (Muller, 1994), rather than a general overall explanation. For the current study, the researcher attempted to understand the meaning women participants place on

entrepreneurship, success, and leadership. The researcher used the responses and beliefs of the participants to answer the research questions.

Research Population and Sampling Method

Identifying the target population is important in research. Creswell (1998) described a population as a group of individuals who have a characteristic that distinguishes them from other groups. The general population for this study consisted of women entrepreneurs who reside in the United States while the target population was women entrepreneurs recruited from three online Facebook groups specifically for entrepreneurial women. The target population represented women from different professional fields of engagement and levels of formal education.

This qualitative study used a subset of the population to create the study sample. Participants in this study were women who own their own businesses. The participants were women entrepreneurs between the ages of 25-44 living in the United States who owned their own business. To begin this study a pilot test was first conducted (Appendix A) using individuals who would qualify as study participants but whose data was not included in the final analysis and results. It was ideal to complete a pilot study to prepare for the actual study as the pilot study helped to determine the time needed for the various data collection phases and to develop the questions used for the interviews and focus groups.

Women entrepreneurs in this study were recruited online from three Facebook groups: Entrepreneurial Moms, Ambitious and Abundant Women Entrepreneurs, and The Christian Women Entrepreneurs. A permission form (see Appendix B) was sent to the moderators of each online group to request permission to post messages within the group in order to recruit participants from each Facebook group.

The convenience sampling method, in which subjects are selected because of their convenient accessibility to the researcher (Rasor & Barr, 1998), was used in this study. Purposeful sampling, a method in which the researcher is intentional about selecting participants based on specific qualifications that match the purpose of the study, was used in this study as well (Patton, 2002). Entrepreneurial Moms is an online Facebook group filled with women who want support in their business while being a mother. The Christian Women Entrepreneurs is another online Facebook group that is led by women entrepreneurs who have a faith-based foundation. Finally, Ambitious and Abundant Women Entrepreneurs is comprised of all women entrepreneurs, who encourage and motivate one another to work hard toward their business.

The inclusion criteria to be eligible for the study required that participants own their own business, which means that they operate at least 50% of the business and required participants to have at least one employee reporting to them. Any woman older than 44 or younger than 25 was excluded from this study; therefore, only entrepreneurs between the ages of 25-44 were included. This age range was chosen as this is often the peak of women in business (Wolverson, 2013).

Regarding sample size, the researcher aimed for a minimum of 20 women participants. To be sure this number was obtained, the researcher over-recruited. Qualitative study participant sizes are generally much smaller than quantitative studies. However, qualitative sample sizes should be large enough to obtain feedback for most or all perceptions. "Qualitative research is very labor-intensive; analyzing a large sample can be time-consuming and often simply impractical" (Mason, 2010, p. 1). There are no specific rules when determining an appropriate sample size in qualitative research. Qualitative sample sizes may best be determined by the time allotted, resources available, and study objectives (Patton, 2002). There are various sampling methods and each produce different results. Convenience sampling is often the most convenient,

due to the participants being easily available. According to Saunders, Lewis, and Thornhill (2012) using convenience sampling is often looked down upon due to the limitation of generalizability. Purposeful sampling is most widely used in qualitative studies. Purposeful sampling is used for identification as well as a selection of information-rich studies in relation to specific phenomenon's (Patton, 2002). This sampling method is to help achieve deeper understanding while this method also increases the researchers understanding. Using this sampling method also helps to further emphasis that a substantive amount of information has been collected. For this study, both convenience and purposeful sampling were used to collect data from the participants.

According to Creswell (1998), it was suggested that the ideal sample size for a phenomenological design is between 5 and 25 participants. According to Bertaux (1981), 15 is the smallest acceptable sample for a study; the sample size of this study included 20 participants to ensure enough data was collected. Each of the women participants was asked to participate in both phases of the data collection methods. The researcher used open-ended questions to identify the experiences of the women entrepreneurs with their own leadership. No participants withdrew during the focus group or interviews; therefore, the researcher had no need to re-recruit.

Saturation is a concept that has been addressed regarding qualitative research. According to Mason (2010), researchers generally use saturation as a guiding principle during data collection. Failure to reach data saturation has an impact on the outcome of the research; hence, it is important to include it. Saturation is used to identify when data has become repetitive. The concept of data saturation has its roots in the grounded or 'bottom-up' theory, as pioneered by Glaser and Strauss in 1967 (Gibson & Brown, 2009). According to O'Donoghue and Punch

(2003), grounded theory is a systematic research method that involves putting together theories through a thorough gathering and analysis of data, which guides the researcher in collecting data. The research used in grounded theory helps with the emergence of conceptual categories. Grounded theory helps with theory development. Grounded theory researchers continue to collect data until they achieve 'theoretical saturation,' which means no new or relevant insights seem to be emerging from the data being collected (Bryman, 2001). This study sought to gain accurate information and therefore guidelines for saturation and appropriate participation were followed.

Sources of Data

The sources of data that were used in this study were open-ended interviews, focus groups, and memoing (see Appendix C, D, and E). According to Longhurst (2003), interviews allow the researcher to relate to each participant individually. With the phenomenological research design, interviews are in-depth and allow the participant to share more and the researcher to gain more insight (Longhurst, 2003). The initial semi-structured interviews in this study enabled probing to elicit in-depth responses to the questions on the interview guide (Anderman & Anderman, 2009).

Gill, Stewart, Treasure, and Chadwick (2008) noted the purpose of research interviews is to further explore the views, experiences, and beliefs of individuals on a topic. Semi-structured interviews consist of several important questions which in turn help to define areas that need to be explored more in-depth. Therefore, interviews are important when little is known about a specific phenomenon.

The purpose of the research interview is to explore the views, experiences, beliefs, and/or motivations of individuals on specific matters. Semi-structured interviews consist of several key

questions that help to define the areas to be explored, but also allows the interviewer or interviewee to diverge in order to pursue an idea or response in more detail. Interviews are, therefore, most appropriate where little is already known about the study phenomenon or where detailed insights are required from individual participants.

According to Glesne and Peshkin (1992), interviewing is a powerful tool that captures the voice of participants and gives meaning to their ideas. An interview is a purposeful conversation between two individuals that is directed to obtain information in the participant's own words, guided by the researcher's questions (Glesne & Peshkin, 1992). "A completely un-structured interview has the risk of not eliciting from the junior researchers the topics or themes more closely related to the research questions under consideration" (Rabionet, 2011, p. 2). Rabionet (2011) observed that structured interviews stick to the questions at hand and are often not conducted in a conversational manner. Rabionet stated that with semi-structured interviews, there is "a verbal interchange where 1 person, the interviewer, attempts to elicit information from another person by asking questions" (p. 3). Although the interviewer prepares a list of predetermined questions, semi-structured interviews unfold in a conversational manner, offering participants the chance to explore issues they feel are important (Longhurst, 2003). For the study, all participants completed an interview using a semi-structured format that lasted approximately one hour per person.

The interview for this research consisted of 19 questions. The topics discussed included how the women began on their journey to becoming an entrepreneur and the experiences that the women had as leaders. The use of interview questions helped to provided information on how the women lived out their experiences as entrepreneurial leaders as well as their views on success. During the focus group and the interviews, the researcher gathered commonly observed

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patterns and collected written notes on the body language of the participants, known as memoing. According to Birks et al. (2008), all qualitative approaches and outcomes can be enhanced using memos. Memoing can be used to enhance the research process and the outcomes in all qualitative approaches (Birks et al., 2008). While completing the focus group as well as the interviews, the researcher collected written notes on the body language of the participants. This is important to observe because the researcher cannot be expected to memorize every detail during each participant interaction session. Glaser (1978) implored the researcher to consider making memo writing a priority to ensure the retention of ideas that may otherwise be lost. Notes that are jotted down can help to jog the researcher's memory later when compiling the data. According to Birks et al., when using memos the researcher is able to engage more in-depth with the participant, which allows the researcher to feel a heightened sense of the meaning of the collected data.

Memoing is an effective tool in qualitative research and was used to collect data for this study. Memos help to clarify thinking on a research topic and provide a mechanism for the articulation of assumptions and subjective perspectives about the area of research (Birks et al., 2008). Memoing can be comparable to journaling. It can be used to enhance the research process and outcomes in all qualitative approaches (Birks et al., 2008). Thus, memoing in this study helped the researcher to gain insight into both the researcher as well as the participant perspective. As this was a phenomenological design, the researcher was able to gauge the perspectives regarding the specific phenomenon of women entrepreneurship.

The third form of data collection was through a focus group. According to Longhurst (2003), a focus group is a group of people, usually between 6 and 12 in number, who meet in an informal setting to talk about a topic that has been set by the researcher. Group size is an

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important consideration in focus group research, as well as making sure that the participants have things in common and feel comfortable sharing with one another. Stewart and Shamdasani (1990) suggested that it is better to slightly over-recruit for a focus group and potentially manage a slightly larger group than to under-recruit and risk having to cancel the session or having an unsatisfactory discussion. According to Gill et al. (2008), the optimum size for a focus group is 6 to 8 participants (excluding researchers) but focus groups can work successfully with as few as three and as many as fourteen participants.

A focus group is a type of interview procedure in which a group of individuals is asked about their perceptions, opinions, beliefs, and attitudes regarding a specific topic (Krueger, 2000). A focus group is a group discussion on a specified topic organized for research purposes. "Semi-structured interviews and focus groups are similar in that they are conversational and informal in tone. Both allow for an open response in the participants' own words rather than a 'yes' or 'no' type of answer" (Longhurst, 2003, p. 145). For this study, the sample participated in focus groups broken into two separate groups, due to the number of participants. The format of the focus groups was open-ended, meaning that there was no boundary to answering questions and the participants were free to expand upon their answers. The researcher asked the participants questions in order to gain insight into their lived experiences.

The two focus groups considered the scheduling preferences of the participants. The researcher made sure the time for the focus group was fair in allowing the participants to pick the time that worked for their schedule. Focus group one had participants one through six, participant 8, 10, 11, and 16. The second focus group had the remaining participants who were not able to participate in focus group number one. The researcher kept track of those who

participated in which group to ensure that the participants were not participating in more than one focus group.

The individual interviews and focus groups met online using the Zoom platform (Terantino, 2014). The Zoom platform is an online forum where individuals can call in or join in using a computer camera for conversation format. Zoom can be used one-on on-one or with multiple participants. Interview and focus group responses were also recorded to allow transcription and subsequent review. The women's views on leadership and success regarding their entrepreneurial journey were the topic of discussion, which generated information on collective views of leadership and success and the meanings underlying those views.

Data Collection

To begin this study, the researcher obtained required Institutional Review Board approval. Following, the researcher reached out to the moderators of the three Facebook groups to get permission to recruit women entrepreneurial leaders from the groups. Once given permission, the researcher gave the moderator a form to sign (Appendix B). After receiving the signed authorization to recruit in the groups, the researcher picked the afternoon time to post a comment regarding the study. The researcher posted a comment informing the participants of the current study and asked if any women entrepreneurs met the criteria and were willing to participate. The women were then advised to direct message the researcher if they were interested in participating. Some of the participants responded within the Facebook group and some of the participants sent a direct message. When they sent the message, the researcher explained what the study was for, reviewed the qualifications to participate and asked for an email in order to send out the consent form. The participants were also made aware that they could terminate their participation at any point during the research.

A pilot study was used to refine the research and also allowed the researcher to go through the questionnaire and gather informative data related to the study. According to Janghorban, Latifnejad, and Taghipour (2014), a pilot or preliminary study is referred to a small-scale of a complete survey or a pretest for a particular research instrument, such as a questionnaire or an interview guide. Pilot studies could be completed using qualitative, quantitative, and even mixed-methods research. Prior to beginning the interviews, the researcher performed two pilot study interviews. The two individuals for the pilot test were recruited via the Facebook entrepreneur group Women Millennial Entrepreneurs. The participants for the pilot study participated in both an individual interview and focus group. Following the pilot study, the instruments may be adjusted based on pilot study participant feedback. The questions remained the same from the pilot study to the final study; however, there was one modification. The participants in the pilot study expressed wishing that they could share more information. The researcher then added the final question of "Is there anything else that you feel is important to add?" to ensure that the participants were able to share the information perceived to be most important.

Using electronic consent forms is not always secure, but the researcher was sure to take precautions to minimize risk, such as using a personal email so that the researcher would be the only person to receive the form.

Before beginning the initial interviews, the researcher spoke with each participant individually using the Zoom platform. During this conversation, the researcher went over the purpose of the study, the confidentiality, and the importance of being open, and reviewed the commitment of time that the study required. Lastly, the participants were given the opportunity

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to ask any questions that they had. Confidentiality was honored by the researcher, agreeing to dispose of the recorded interviews after they are transcribed, and reviewed by the participant.

Individual interviews were the first source of data collection to take place. The interview method was used to collect data from the perspective of the women entrepreneurs. Once interviews began, the researcher allowed the participants as much time as needed in order to ensure that they answered the questions fully and gave all the information that they felt was pertinent. Each interview lasted approximately one hour. The interviews took place online using a platform called Zoom, and the entire interview process was recorded using zoom software (Zoom, 2017). The individuals present were only the researcher and the interviewee. Upon completion of the interview, the recorded interviews were transcribed. To engage in member checking, the researcher created a system where the participant received an email from the researcher with the transcript for review. The participants were given 72 hours to review and send back. This process was explained at the beginning of the interviews. There were no concerns or edits with regard to the email within the time frame; because of this, the transcripts, were not updated.

The next phase of data collection was to have the participants participate in a focus group. The researcher emailed the women participants to check for available times and pick the day and time that works best with them. It is easier to schedule when fewer women are involved because it reduces the likelihood of conflicts. Due to the size of the original interview group, the focus group was broken down into two separate sessions of approximately 10 participants. Each focus group lasted two hours (Krueger, 2000). The participants from the interview were the same participants in the focus group. An email was sent out asking for confirmation from the

participants; therefore, the researcher knew in advance who could participate in the focus groups. The focus groups were also recorded using the Zoom software.

Ensuring the individual interviews were open-ended was beneficial to allow the opportunity for the participant to share information that may be of importance. With focus groups, the process should be a bit more structured, to avoid the participants getting off topic. The focus groups for this study were structured to assure the information being shared was related to the topic of discussion and to assure that the participants were all allotted a fair amount of time. According to Gill et al. (2008), expressing one's own views tends to give participants cues as to what to say (introducing bias) rather than the confidence to be open and honest about their own views. Therefore, the researcher began by guiding the questions and the group discussion but did not participate in the discourse.

The final form of research and data collection was the use of memoing (see Appendix E). The researcher collected memos throughout the individual interviews and focus groups, which allowed the researcher to look for common themes amongst the participants. This is also allowed the researcher to record what was being noted. The use of memos helped when transcribing data. Using all three sources of data, triangulation, allowed for accurate and thorough data collection, based on the premise that no single source ever adequately solves the problem of rival explanation (Patton, 2002). The three sources of data the researcher utilized were the transcriptions and recordings from the interviews, the transcriptions from the focus groups, and memoing templates.

Identification of Attributes

For this study, the researcher's focus was success, women entrepreneurs, and leadership styles. The discussion included interpersonal skills and success. These attributes were reviewed

to determine the way in which women entrepreneurs define each term. The attributes were discussed during the focus groups as well as during the open-ended interviews. Good science must begin with good definitions (Bygrave & Hofer, 1991).

The first term that was defined was entrepreneur. For this study, the definition of an entrepreneur was an individual who establishes a firm and bears the start-up costs necessary to exploit her entrepreneurial behavior and pursue profit (Casson, 2005). According to Kobia and Sikalieh (2010), entrepreneurship is viewed by developing an idea, assessing it for its attractiveness, using the most appropriate strategies in implementing and managing it, and growing it, which are the core for successful entrepreneurship. When the researcher referred to successful entrepreneurship, Kobia and Sikalieh's (2010) approach was used. Theoretical models of entrepreneurship are weak or non-existent, and the term entrepreneur is still vaguely defined, even though entrepreneurship scholars seem absorbed with defining the word entrepreneur (Le Blanc, 1994).

Serial entrepreneur is a term that is often used throughout this study. There have been noted to be many different types of entrepreneurs (Lewis, 2011). According to Lewis (2011), a serial entrepreneur is an individual who leads more than one business. The person may begin one business and then quickly start another, or they may have several businesses running at the same time.

Success was also used throughout this study and can be considered a very broad term. Success is assessed differently by people and is often defined differently, based on the topic. Several definitions were reviewed. For this study, success was defined as personal satisfaction and/or performance measures that are agreed upon by several researchers (Still et al., 2005).

Lastly, leadership is also a term that is often discussed in research. Much like success, leadership can be defined differently, based on values or the specific topic. For this study, leadership was defined according to an individual influencing a group of others to achieve a common goal, emphasizing a process or a transactional event over the traits or characteristics residing in the leader (Northouse, 2004). Leadership is more than convincing others to believe and do what you say. Leadership is about acting in a way that allows others to also believe what you believe and encouraging them to work toward that. Northouse (2013) stated, "Some people are leaders because of their formal position in an organization, whereas others are leaders because of the way other group members respond to them" (p.7). Leadership provides a new perspective. Leadership is not gender-specific; women and men alike can lead effectively (Liautaud, 2016). For this study, leadership was defined as the ability to act in a way that motivates others to work toward the same goals because they also see the value in it. Leadership is the ability to possess the skills of honesty, integrity, creativity as well as positive communication to make the most impact.

Data Analysis Procedures

This study attempted to determine if common characteristics were identified amongst the participants comprised of successful women entrepreneurs. Data analysis is a systematic process of searching and organizing the transcripts gathered from the interviews and any information gleaned from documents that are collected to increase the researcher's understanding of what has been seen, heard, and read, to make sense about what one is learning (Glesne & Peshkin, 1992). For this study, the analysis involved the process of sorting identified themes and concepts into major categories extracted from descriptive data and themes.

Each transcript was read once initially to get a sense of the information and checked for errors, then read again, to look for themes. The researcher looked for emerging categories. Based on what women discussed during the interviews, the researcher identified categories which were then color-coded (Harper & Cole, 2012). The categories included leadership, success, history, and educational experiences. This color coordination process was used to gauge commonalities of categories amongst all the participants. Creswell (1994) stated, "The researcher takes voluminous amounts of information and reduces it to certain patterns, categories, or themes, and then interprets this information by using some schema" (p. 154). Creswell also stated, "For phenomenology studies, the outcome typically consists of a descriptive narrative, a synthesis of knowledge about the phenomenon under study" (p. 160). The data analysis reports whether the data supported or contradicted the anticipated results of the study.

The important part of research is to ensure that informative data is being gathered effectively. Triangulation is a powerful research technique that assists with the validation of data through two or more sources. Triangulation refers to the application and combination of several research methods in the study of the same phenomenon and was used in the study. For this study using memoing, individual interviews, and focus groups created data triangulation. Using these three methods separately and then combining them, during the data analysis process ensured that triangulation was achieved. Triangulation is very important in data collection. Merriam (1998) proposed triangulation of data, member checking, long-term observation, peer examination, participatory modes of research, and clarifying researcher bias. In this study, the researcher used triangulation of data to ensure validity. This helped ensure a comprehensive interpretation of the collected data.

Limitations of Research Design

The study was aimed to explore the way in which women entrepreneurs view leadership and success. Although the results of this study may be important to similar programs and contribute to the research on women entrepreneurs, the findings may not be transferable to a broader and more diverse population due to the small sample size. Therefore, a limitation of this study was the sample size and that the findings may not be easily generalizable to the intended population.

The use of memos in an online space can also be seen as a limitation. As a novice researcher, it can be challenging to use memoing. It becomes even more complex trying to implement memoing in an online space. The researcher used statements and interjections stated by the participants to complete the memoing document for data collection.

Another limitation of this study was that of anonymity. The participants may be able to be identified based on their responses to the focus group and interview questions. This was addressed by using participant numbers instead of identifying information. An additional limitation for this study was using self-reported data. Since the reports can very rarely be confirmed, this served as a limitation. Lastly, the presence of the researcher could affect responses from the participants. Researcher bias can come from a reaction given to a participant's response, so the researcher avoided giving opinions. Another limitation of this study was that data collection was only at one point in time. This has the potential to limit the opportunity to determine patterns or investigate other variables that may also play a role in entrepreneurial success. Lastly, for the interviews and focus groups, the questions were asked in the exact same order. This helps to avoid leading questions bias.

The choice of the problem to research is the first delimiting step since there are other problems that could have been the focus of the research. Since the researcher only decided to focus on women leaders, this poses as a delimitation. Another key delimitation is that there were only three groups on Facebook that were targeted. Another delimitation was that the use of Zoom accounts might have limited the individuals who could participate; this was a delimitation because the data was gathered from a limited section of society. In addition, another delimitation of this study was that it is focused only on women with entrepreneur experience and at least one year of leadership experience living in the U.S. Additionally, the women participants were delimited to entrepreneurs between the ages of 25–44.

Validation

The concept of including integrity in research findings was first raised by Wallendorf and Belk (1989). The authors believed that the challenge facing qualitative researchers was how to ensure that the data provided by the participants was not manufactured by the researcher. Therefore, researchers must ensure that maintaining validity within their studies. Quantitative researchers apply statistical methods for establishing the credibility and dependability of research findings; qualitative researchers aim to design and incorporate methodological strategies to ensure the 'trustworthiness' of the findings.

Credibility. This study was used to help inform future studies. The researcher documented the research questions, the interview questions, the data collection, and the various forms of data collection to establish consistency as well as repeatability. By using multiple sources of data, the researcher engaged in data triangulation. Triangulation includes using multiple methods and data sources to gain a thorough understanding of the phenomenon being studied. Qualitative researchers also validate data using member checking, a process that invites

participants to comment on the interview transcript and ask whether the final themes and concepts created, adequately reflect the phenomena being investigated. The researcher therefore incorporated member checking to ensure credibility. Member checking continues to be an important quality control process in qualitative research, as during completing a study, participants receive the opportunity to review their statements for accuracy (Harper & Cole, 2012).

Dependability. Dependability can be viewed as the data staying the same over time and through different circumstances (Anney, 2014). According to Bitsch (2005), dependability is "the stability of findings over time" (p. 86). In order for a study to be deemed dependable, it needs to be both consistent and accurate. As circumstances do change the researcher documented the process for this study in depth for future researchers. Being able to describe the research allows this study to be repeatable which speaks to the dependability of the results of the research (Anney, 2014).

Expected Findings

It was expected that the results would show commonalities amongst women as entrepreneurs. It was expected that the women participants in this research would have a good understanding of their leadership views. It was also expected that participants would express common experiences with one another (Rosser, 2001). Expected findings included participants expressing different examples of their own personal leadership experiences as entrepreneurs, possibly differing based on age or business type. It was also expected that participants would express different definitions of what success is, depending on their own life experiences and current place in life as an entrepreneur. Finally, it was expected that all participants would indicate that leadership has a positive impact on their entrepreneurial success. Tomos et al.

(2015) discussed, "the essence of "leadership" as the willingness to accept responsibility for influencing the future. In the context of women entrepreneurs describing their success, it was expected that they would speak about the amount of business they brought and their networking capabilities. Regarding leadership style, it was expected that women who had success in their business would define having more of a laissez-faire or transformational leadership approach. Rieger (2012) suggested a need to understand the impact that leadership has on entrepreneurial success. The anticipated results included the expectation that participants would indicate critical skills that leaders possess and help identify key components of success.

Ethical Issues

The researcher made every effort to ensure that the highest ethical standards were employed throughout the research study and that no risk or harm was imposed upon the participants. To ensure that ethical standards were followed during the study, the participants were informed that they could choose to discontinue participation at any time. The participants were informed of this in the initial consent form that the participants received from the researcher, which also included contact information of the researcher and overseeing IRB board.

Conflict of interest assessment. A conflict of interest is where personal considerations or situations may be compromised during research. The researcher did not recruit women whom the researcher knew. In addition, to ensure that there was no conflict of interest, each participant was given a consent form disclosing the information regarding the study. This was an opportunity to highlight if there were any issues that could be a conflict of interest.

Researcher's position. The researcher recorded all of the interviews and focus groups. In addition, each focus group was audio-recorded using Zoom and linked with memos. These were each deleted permanently once transcribed. The researcher refrained from sharing personal

information, which could potentially contribute to the responses that the participants share. As the main data collection instrument, it was important that the researcher avoid researcher bias as well. Lastly, the email address for the researcher was given to the participants as to avoid any further ethical issues relating to confidentiality. The women entrepreneurs were encouraged to contact the researcher at any point if questions arose. All details regarding the purpose of the study were fully disclosed to the participants in the beginning and the results of the study were made available to participants upon request.

Summary

A phenomenological qualitative study was used to explore the success and leadership views of women entrepreneurs. The women who participated in this study were women who own their own businesses and are classified as entrepreneurs. The women participants were entrepreneurs between the ages of 25–44. The women participants reside in the United States. This was intentional for the outcome to inform future studies and not to be limited to a certain population.

The current research discussed women's leadership style, their success, and entrepreneurship. Qualitative research is natural, and therefore, contextual. This research used focus groups and individual open-ended interviews along with researcher memoing. It is by studying the individual dynamics in the natural setting that the researcher can gather more insight into the participants and how the participants have created meaning as their experiences are shaped. Qualitative research has the aim of understanding experience as nearly as possible, as its participants feel it or live it (Sherman & Webb, 1990). Using these methods, the researcher was able to gain more information regarding women entrepreneurs and success.

The participants were recruited from three online Facebook entrepreneur groups. They were recruited based on whether they responded to the post that the researcher submitted to the group. Upon identifying the twenty women participants, the women participated in individual open-ended interviews along with two separate focus groups. This allowed for data collection regarding leadership, entrepreneurship, and success. The researcher also used memoing to obtain additional information to add to the data collected. Once the data was gathered, it was transcribed and stored for reference, if needed, later.

The goal of this study was to explore women entrepreneurs' experiences with leadership and success. To effectively approach this research in a phenomenological manner, the researcher sought to understand the participants' lived experiences and their interpretation of them. By employing a phenomenological research design, the researcher sought to answer the three main research questions presented in this chapter. Through the process of qualitative inquiry, the goal was to offer more insight into the beliefs about leadership and success for women entrepreneurs.

Chapter 4: Data Analysis and Results

The purpose of this study was to gain insight into the lived experiences of women entrepreneurs. The analysis involved in-depth open-ended interviews with 20 women to explore their thoughts and experiences related to leadership and entrepreneurship. Qualitative research methodology permits the exploration and understanding of a phenomenon from lived participant experiences (Merriam, 1998). It is pivotal that research data is gathered effectively to ensure that the research is informing the community of entrepreneurs. The data analysis process of this research involved sorting identified themes and concepts into major categories extracted from descriptive data and themes. For this research study, the analysis included the process of first interviewing the participants and transcribing the interviews. The next step was extracting common themes and concepts from the transcripts. The common themes and concepts were put into categories that answered each individual research question. The data extracted was used to analyze the results of the study.

The researcher is an entrepreneur and therefore was motivated to begin this research focusing on women entrepreneurs. The researcher chose to gain better insight into identifying how women viewed their success and how they also identified themselves as leaders. The researcher worked by conducting interviews among the women, interacting with the participants both one-on-one and within the focus groups. From reviewing former research, it was noted that the best method to conduct the current study was to research women entrepreneurs using a qualitative design (Patton, 2002). By having the participants describe personal experiences, the goal of the research was to explore the leadership experiences of these women.

The premise of this study was based on three overarching research questions:

1. How do women entrepreneurs describe and interpret their leadership experiences as entrepreneurs?

2. How do women entrepreneurs describe their success as entrepreneurs?

3. From the perspective of women entrepreneurs, what impact do leadership styles have on their entrepreneurial success?

The research was gathered and reviewed to better understand the data that was being collected. The results from this current research illustrated common themes amongst the participants regarding how they view leadership and success. This chapter presents the key findings obtained from 20 in-depth interviews and two focus groups along with researcher memoing. The major findings will be discussed in Chapter 4 and analyzed in Chapter 5. Specifically, Chapter 4 presents the research results through data analysis in the format of written summary and tables.

Description of the Sample

For this study, data were collected from women entrepreneurial leaders. The women who participated owned their businesses and had at least one employee reporting to them. The women were between the ages of 25 and 44. Additionally, the participants had varying levels of education.

The original goal was to complete focus groups and one-on-one interviews with a total of 20 women. The actual number of women who participated in the one-on-one interviews was 20. Each of the women who participated in the individual interviews also participated in the focus group part of the study as well. No participants were removed by the researcher or themselves.

However, two individuals signed up for the study but did not complete the one-on-one interview or attend the scheduled focus group.

The participants were identified by their age, gender, and entrepreneurial status. Some participants discussed their level of education and the role it played in their entrepreneurial and leadership pursuits, but this was not consistent amongst all the interviews. Of the 20 participants in the study, 14 of the participants reported being coaches or consultants, including business coaches and life coaches. The rest worked in such other businesses as author, real estate, make-up artist, t-shirt business, housecleaning, and trainer/recruiter. On average, the participants had been in business for between two and five years. Since participants were not asked about their family situation, it is possible that some participants had families or children but did not mention it in the interview. Following is a brief description of the women who participated in this study.

Participant Descriptions

Pilot study participant 1. This participant is a mother who desired to look for an additional stream of income to help support her children. This participant began selling facial care and learned to make a business out of it. Participant 1 now works to help other women find financial freedom through extra streams of income. As a pilot study participant, her data was not included in the final analysis.

Pilot study participant 2. As a coach for blended families this woman uses her challenges from marrying into a blended family as an opportunity to coach step-mothers to embrace the new union. As a pilot study participant, her data was not included in the final analysis.

Participant 1. This participant labeled herself as a serial entrepreneur. Participant 1 identified as a business mentor for women in business and leaders who are achieving a level of

success and they feel empty and for women who want to achieve and do more in their lives, and businesses but feel like life is standing in their way. The second title the participant holds is as a homeschooling parent who coaches other homeschooling families to success.

Participant 2. This participant teaches women how to remove the limits from any area of their lives when it comes to a career change, starting a business, issues in relationships, dealing with the past. This participant considers herself a life coach. The goal of this participant is in helping women and showing them how to deal with the issues of their past which requires moving whatever those limits are. This participant also helps others to take strategic steps to create the lifestyle they want, that is for them.

Participant 3. This participant defines herself as a serial entrepreneur. As a child, the participant was raised in a hostel and lived with people with developmental and intellectual disabilities, and realized the need to support that group of individuals through her very own non-profit organization.

Participant 4. Participant 4 also considers herself to be a serial entrepreneur. This study participant has both a cheerleading and dance business but has also recently begun a Christian T-shirt line. Through her role, the participant desires to bring awareness of Christ to the world and uses both of her businesses to do this.

Participant 5. This participant currently owns a consulting business. Originally, the participant worked full time at a planning company that later told her that they did not have a need for her job. Upon reflection, the participant reviewed her passion and realized that she had been living for everyone else. Next, the participant decided that it would be a good opportunity to step into her passion and do what she truly desired to do.

Participant 6. As a participant, this woman shared how she went through a divorce that almost destroyed her financially. Participant 6 has used this experience to help free women from the barrier of debt and help them to create wealth therefore she labels the role of her business as a financial coach.

Participant 7. This participant is a Professional Independent Consultant who supports startup businesses. Participant 7 does corporate training and software development rollouts. Participant 7 built a startup company, which focuses on sexual harassment training, discrimination training, and the policy around that to help bring awareness and reduce this from happening in bigger businesses. This research participant believes as a leader that she helps bring awareness to pertinent issues in her field.

Participant 8. As a single mother of two with a daughter who has a serious medical illness, this woman needed to have flexibility in her schedule to be available for her daughter. This participant began her own real estate company to help provide affordable housing for lower-income families.

Participant 9. This participant is a personal growth coach who now plans retreats for women who are in major life transitions that would like to make sense of the life changes. The participant uses getaway retreats as a forum for women to reflect on their life changes and learn to embrace the changes.

Participant 10. As a military wife, this participant needed a job or career that could travel effectively with her. This participant knew that it needed to be online and so she began to reflect on her skills and what she could bring to the online space. She is now a social media and ad design coach. In the entrepreneurial role, this participant works to help coaches and authors to launch a program online or some type of downloadable product.

Participant 11. This participant is a trainer and recruiter that uses her skills to train and recruit individuals for other companies. The participant described her leadership experience as being very cognizant about avoiding talking about action, but instead actually taking action.

Participant 12. This participant has a passion for writing. While having a passion for writing, she noted that it only made sense for her to take this passion and monetize it. In the role of an entrepreneur, this participant works as a literary mentor for both authors and writers. Participant 12 helps to teach others the skills to write, publish, and prosper off their stories, ideas, and books.

Participant 13. To honor her family, this participant began her own small cleaning company bringing a personal touch and feel to housekeeping. This participant works locally to clean houses in her community and has done this for almost 20 years.

Participant 14. This participant owns a marketing consulting firm. The firm is used to help provide other women entrepreneurs with the tools to market their businesses effectively. Although the business just began two years ago, her ultimate goal is to help close the wage gap for women entrepreneurs.

Participant 15. This participant is an author that believes the calling of life is to sell and market books. As an author participant, she uses the social work background to incorporate transparency in her writings to help encourage, support, and motivate other people all around the world. This participant just began the business a year ago and only engages in her entrepreneurial business part time but plans to expand to full time soon.

Participant 16. This participant is new to the entrepreneur world as the business began one year ago. In the business, participant 16 works with women coaches, consultants, and

service-based entrepreneurs, and helps them to monetize their expertise. As a coach, the decision was made to use the online platform to ensure that her business is international.

Participant 17. This participant is also new to the entrepreneurial world. Participant 17 began as a transition coach a little over one year ago. This participant began her business by creating an outdoor group which helped women to use nature to reflect on where they are in life. This coach helps women to find their peace amid crazy life transitions. Participant 17 uses her own personal life transitions to support women who are also going through rough times.

Participant 18. This participant is a professional makeup artist. As an independent contractor, participant 18 works with marketing teams, production teams, and for certain television commercials. The job of coach entails ensuring that others are presentable before going on air. Within the last two years, she returned to the whole mindset, confidence, certainty, and energy psychology route to help women also walk away with confidence.

Participant 19. This participant is a brand strategist coach. Participant 19 coaches other business to focus on the target audience to learn to speak to the audience through branding. The focus of this business is on small business owners and individuals who are career oriented. Participant 19 noticed that without having a thorough understanding of who you are marketing to, the business will suffer. To avoid the struggle in other businesses she decided she would step out and help.

Participant 20. This participant spent years working to help women build their confidence in her regular position. Using those skills, she decided to expand outward and is now a leadership and personal presence coach who works with high achieving God-centered entrepreneurs who are ready with the power to show up and shine. She believes that her leadership is to help women show up confident in their own life. This participant is a leadership

and personal presence coach. She has a background as a minister and used that platform to begin this business.

Research Methodology and Analysis

The research used a qualitative phenomenological methodology to answer the research question. Saturation was achieved for this study as the information shared was consistent, as themes and concepts were being repeated throughout the interviews. After interviewing the women participants, the data gathered was transcribed. With the transcribed data, the researcher created an excel document pulling out all the important data which would, in turn, be used for writing up of the data analysis. On the Excel data set, demographic information was collected, the number of years in entrepreneurship and the self-designated title for each participant was noted. The researcher then intended to define leadership and success by breaking both terms into individual themes based on the feedback from the women. When reading the transcribed interviews, the researcher looked for commonalities and used these as the themes for the coding process. Commonalities included the number of years that women were in business. Some other examples of commonalities included statements for the purpose behind beginning their business. There were also many common themes. For success, the most common themes were a work-life balance, making a difference, monetary, emotional, and having freedom. Whenever the participant expressed one of these themes, the theme was entered into the Excel data sheet layout. Important quotes were also highlighted and added to the excel document to help clarify, meaning that the women were giving to their experiences.

Themes. As stated previously, there were many themes discussed throughout the research. For example, when the women discussed giving back to others or helping others, those two concepts were combined into a theme. If the women discussed having extra time and

flexibility, such statements were also grouped together and categorized under the theme of freedom. Similarly, if the women discussed having extra money to spend or being able to pay off debt, the statements were considered concepts related to income. Therefore, statements such as these were coded under a financial theme for data analysis purposes.

Memoing. During the focus groups and the interviews, the researcher collected memos on statements that were not simply said by the participants but instead expressed by the participants. Each participant had separate memos completed by the researcher. The use of memoing in the data collection process allowed the researcher to take reflective notes regarding what was being learned through the data collection process. The memos were used for data analysis to help highlight themes and commonalities that were stated among the various participants.

Table 1

Participant Demographic Information

Years in Business	Number of Participants expressing that concept
0-2	5
2-5	9
5-10	4
10+	2
Total	20

Demographics. Table 1 highlights the demographic information of the participants. Table 1 specifically focuses on the number of years that the women participants have been in the entrepreneurial business. Table1 is useful to provide insight into the women that participated in the study. Based on the information shared by the participants, most of the women have been in business between two to five years. Specifically, 45% (9) had been in business for two to five years. Of all of the participants, 20% (4) have been in business between five to 10 years. Only 10% (2) of the participants have been in business for more than 10 years. Finally, 25% (5) of the

women who participated in this study were new entrepreneurs as they had been in business less than two years. After understanding demographic information, the researcher looked through the collected data to further determine the leadership styles and the relation to success. Table 2 is displayed to highlight the information shared amongst participants regarding their self-reported leadership styles.

Table 2

Participants' Self-Reported Leadership Styles: Success Themes

Leadership style	Participants expressing the concept
Transformational leadership style	13
Expert (Intellectual stimulation)	4
Success: True to self	7
Tune into client needs (Idealized consideration)	12
Success: Freedom	7
Lead by doing (Idealized influence)	8
Motivate (Inspirational motivation)	8
Autocratic leadership style	4
Take charge	4

Table 2 displays the leadership style that the women participants most closely identified with. This style was chosen by the characteristics the women expressed in their one-on-one interviews. These characteristics were then linked to the leadership style the characteristics most closely related to. The style that the majority of the women related to is that of transformational leadership. Based on the responses, more than half (13) of the participants related to aligned with the transformational leadership approach. The concept the various forms of transformational leadership is likely and the most common due to difference amongst the transformative nature of it.

The concept of being true to yourself regarding success was expressed by 35% (7) of the participants. Tuning in to client needs was expressed by 60% (12) of the participants. The women expressed the need to have more time freedom and flexibility within their current roles.

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This concept was expressed by 35% (7) participants. Both leading by doing and motivating others was expressed by 40% (8) participants. Only 20% (4) participants related to the leadership style of taking charge. These same women also expressed relating to the concept of autocratic leadership as well. This approach is contradictory to transformational leadership, which relates to the percentage of women who did not relate to this approach.

Leadership was broken up into three themes, which were determined based on the common responses of the participants. Fluid leadership, management leadership, and transformational leadership were the types of leadership themes used for this study. During the interviews, whenever the women discussed different concepts or beliefs that related to one of these themes, the responses were coded as such. Comments from the participants in relation to the leadership theory were placed on the excel data sheet. The participants did not identify a specific leadership name but used characteristics to identify a leadership style they related to most. The excel data sheet helped to give an overview of the material that was being shared and commonalities amongst all the participants. It also helped to categorize which women resonated with a particular leadership style.

With minimal pre-existing research regarding women leaders, the coding categories were not determined in advance. The categories were chosen after the data was collected and common themes and categories began to emerge. The responses of the women were reviewed, and common phrases were pulled out for data analysis. These themes were identified after each individual interview was transcribed. After completing the transcription, the analysis highlighted common words, but not themes. The researcher identified the themes based on the transcripts. Although the process was more time consuming, the researcher extracted the data by hand to be sure that nothing was left out or overlooked.

Phenomenology. Phenomenology by definition is to make meaning out of a specific phenomenon (Creswell, 1998). With this current study, the researcher was seeking to understand the meaning women have regarding their success and their leadership style. The researcher was also seeking to better understand if women entrepreneurial leaders believe that their leadership style impacts their success. For this particular reason, phenomenology was well fitted for this research.

With a phenomenological approach, the researcher was able to study in depth success and leadership styles. Using phenomenology allowed the research to collect both themes and meanings that emerged from the data. Being able to better understand lived experiences that the participants explored and expressed throughout this study allowed the researcher to bring meaning and awareness to the way in which women view both leadership as well as success. The results from phenomenological studies help to expose misconceptions that may exist around a particular phenomenon (Creswell, 1998).

Summary of the Findings

Once data collection was completed, the researcher highlighted the main concepts that women entrepreneurs experienced within their leadership positions. These main concepts emerged based on responses in the interviews and focus groups. There were several themes that emerged from the interviews. These themes were defined based on the way that women view success. The themes for leadership style consisted of leading by doing, tuning into the needs of others, taking charge, and being motivational to those being led.

The themes for success included making a difference to others, being true to self and values, reaching goals, positive quality of life, making money, achieving financial freedom, freedom to make rules and choices, and achieving work-family balance. All these themes were

identified and then categorized for the researcher to help to make sense of the data. When

compiled, the data revealed that each of the women had different experiences with leadership,

but the themes that related to leadership and success were similar.

      One-on-one interviews. Before conducting the final participant interviews, the

investigator conducted two pilot interviews. A pilot interview was used to discover

unanticipated issues or omissions in the data collection process (Appendix A). This pilot study

was also used to help the interviewer determine if the time estimated for each interview was

reasonable. After conducting the pilot study, the researcher determined that common themes

emerged and similar experiences were expressed. This process helped to inform the final

interview questions that were added to the final study. With the pilot study, women did not have

an opportunity to add important details that they thought would benefit the researcher.

Therefore, this was added to the interview questions as the last question. The difference between

the pilot study and the final study is referenced in Appendix A and Appendix C. This question

was added to allow the women to provide more information and allow the participants to express

different things that they thought were important to document. It also gave the researcher more

insight into their lived experiences and more data on the experiences and beliefs.

      Three questions guided this research on leadership and entrepreneurship. The three

questions used to direct this study included how women entrepreneurs describe their leadership

experiences as business entrepreneurs. The second question address was to further understand

how women entrepreneurs describe their success as business entrepreneurs. Finally, the last

question used to guide this study asked how women entrepreneurs believed that their leadership

style impacted their success.

Regarding research question number one leadership was discussed very differently amongst the women participants. The responses of the participants fell in one of three categories. The themes that emerged based on characteristics that were expressed were fluid leadership, management type of leadership and transformational leadership. Each of the participants was asked to gauge experiences as a business entrepreneur and then those experiences were coded to fit into one of the categories.

Fluid leadership. Fluid leadership is a leadership style that changes based on the needs of the people being led (Thomas, et al., 2015). The fluid leadership experiences were expressed in six different interviews. Participant 1 stated,

> Being a leader was a new term that I had to embrace when going into business. I have
> always been a person that is easy to talk to, I appreciate that everybody feels comfortable
> to ask the questions and to know that I am going to give them something based on our
> company and on what went well for me so far.

The participant is not strictly focusing on one approach, but instead is approaching the process creatively to find out what works and what is effective. Participant 16 offered that others refer to her as a standoffish leader because she does not micromanage. She expressed that she does not approach leadership in only one way, but instead works to expand leadership because she believes it is always changing. As this participant expressed, her leadership is constantly changing, confirmation that the leadership is not one approach, but instead, it is fluid and adjusting based on the situation.

Participant 9 related that her leadership is very creative because she has abstract thinking when it is time to brainstorm solutions. She expressed that she loves leadership because she likes to motivate teams to be creative and collaborative. Since her leadership does not fit in a

box, it can easily be viewed as a fluid approach. Fluid leadership is said to be ever changing and

this quote relates to the idea that leadership can be fluid. Similarly, participant 5 noted that her

leadership style avoids fitting into a box because she does not ever want to lock herself down to

one specific thing. Again, leadership does not have only one approach. Leadership can be

approached in various making it ever changing and therefore fluid as well. Participant 18

observed that she is very creative and that her experiences often show that she needs someone to

wheel her back in. Participant 19 stated, "In my experience as a leader I often push outside the

box and there have been times where people tell me I cannot do something, and I do it just to

prove them wrong." Pushing outside the norm or the "box" is a prime example of leadership

being a changing concept that can be adapted as needed to be effective. Participant 20 replied to

her leadership experiences by stating

> I don't push to be a leader, it kind of just happens that way. People who are interested in
>
> what I'm doing or interested in how I'm carrying myself, the decisions that I make and
>
> they kind of just follow my lead, you know, I don't say, Hey, come do this-this is just
>
> most of I am and how I carry myself and it makes them interested

Each participant expressed leadership with a unique definition, but each aligned with the fluid

leadership concept.

Servant leadership. Servant leadership occurs when leaders serve their followers in

order to lead more effectively (Bass & Avolio, 1994). As a leader, it can be challenging to both

follow and lead, so the leadership approach is not common. With management experience as a

business entrepreneur, there were two respondents that reported aspects of servant leadership.

Participant 3 stated, "I'm still going to tell you that you need to get jaw breaking boxing geared

and get stuff in order. And I'm going to bug you until you do so, but I show you that I am not

too good to do those things as well." This participant understood the concept of servant leadership by expressing that she too would be willing to do the same thing as those whom she is leading. Participant 19 stated, "I show by doing. I like to help others and in exchange, I hope they give back to help support me." This participant expressed the power of servant leadership by being an example. She understood that showing her followers that she is willing to do the same thing that she asks of them will help them to engage more and her to lead more effectively. She went on to say, "why should anyone take out the trash for you if you're too good to touch it yourself." She noted that there is power in serving because people can then relate to you more and possibly become more willing to go above and beyond.

Transformational leadership. Transformational leadership is a style of leadership where a leader works with subordinates to identify the needed change. These leaders work to create a vision to guide the change through inspiration and to execute the change that is needed. Transformational leadership serves to enhance the motivation as well as the job performance of followers through connecting the follower through their sense of identity, by being a role model for followers.

The transformational leadership experiences were displayed in eleven interviews. Participant 15 stated regarding her leadership experience:

> Those that I lead would tell you that I am compassionate; they would tell you that I am also direct. They would tell you that I know I will help you. So, they would tell you, that you know I am compassionate; I'm willing to help others.

Regarding her experiences, participant 4 stated:

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I am aggressive in a passionate way and if you ask others they will tell you that to be a

leader, you have to be willing to follow. I lean on my team and they in turn lean on me

… I'm definitely a lead by example person in all of my leadership experiences.

Regarding her leadership experience, participant 19 stated:

I believe I am a dynamic leader, I mean I have the drive, I am persistent, I love goals, I

love datelines, and timelines. I love that community of everybody working together,

where I will see something being born and also see the outcome of that. Me being in that

leadership that is also breaking it down, helping people digest it, and be able to make it

work for everybody.

Participant 19 noted that her experiences as a leader have all been the same. She stated, "I

believe that I present a really in-depth understanding about people experiences and from now, we

will be able to go forward to improving their own, you know, state of lives in their own self-

understanding."

Participant 11 reported that her experience with leadership is to hold others accountable

by being a good example. She enjoys bringing people together. This sentiment was expressed

throughout the one-on-one interview, which highlighted the value behind helping others.

Participant 10 expressed her leadership experience as avoiding judgment. She stated:

It is important to be able to recognize that you don't know everything and that in any and

every situation you can learn something if you are humble enough to believe that and to

accept that and to be open to learning. I think learning is critical to leadership. I think

that if we stay in a right of one way the same way is the best way. We don't evolve as a

leader. I think leaders evolve. I think leader are continual learners.

Finally, participant 10 identified her leadership experience as "I am not just anyone, but instead someone my followers can relate to. In all of my interactions and experiences, I use my personal stories and situations to help my clients." Research question 1 sought to identify the way in which the female entrepreneurial leaders identify their leadership experiences. The results provided unique beliefs related to leadership experiences, but also had some commonalities amongst the participants, including the importance of leading by example.

While identifying a leadership style, various themes emerged. The themes were seeing a vision, creating a structure, leading by example, making a difference, tuning in to needs, expert, motivating others, taking charge, and monetary themes. These themes were present in the interviews with each of the participants and were commonly discussed, with the themes being discussed so often within the individual interviews as well as the focus groups it gave the researcher the opportunity to analyze what the themes mean. The researcher was able to gain more insight into these themes and how the women participants interpreted them for their individual lives. Identifying the themes also helped the researcher to understand what is important to women as it relates to their leadership style.

Vision. During the interviews, many themes were expressed such as having a vision. Vision is the ability to visualize the entrepreneurial pursuit and what that could mean for the participant as well as others. Participant 20 expressed the leadership theme of having a vision by stating that she shows vision through staying up all night to make sure those whom she is leading are following her on the right course. Participant 18 expressed the importance of knowing where you are going and getting others on board for success. Participant 20 also highlighted the motivational factors. She noted that she is a leader that motivates and encourages by taking on others' ideas and visions and working as a team toward them. Participant 6 expressed the theme

of having a vision throughout her interview. She reported that she thrives on providing both a strategy and a vision and when combined it helps to inspire others. These women were able to have a vision for their dream and act on it. They shared the importance of having a vision and the ability to use one's leadership. The beliefs of the participants show that without a vision, leadership could become confusing or ineffective. Their sentiments confirm how visualizing and leadership approach are directly related.

Creating structure. Creating structure is a theme in which participants express the importance of bringing organization to their business. Participant 20 expressed the leadership theme of structure. She observed that, as a leader, her goal is to try to make everything work behind the scenes. Participant 8 stated, "At the end of the day is what they all need; someone to walk alongside them and provide the stability they desire." Participant 20 observed that when she works toward others visions she knows it can never be successful without a strategic plan in place and with her leadership she seeks to always have a plan. Participant 6 also related to this theme. She noted that she uses strategy and structure to reach her success in leadership and this helps because it empowers others. Participant 5 related to the ability to provide structure by understanding the needs of her followers. Structure was a theme revealed by participants to be important in relation to leadership.

Leading by example. Leading by example is often described as being able to be an effective leader by being a positive example and allowing those whom you are leading to follow an example. Participant 13 expressed the beliefs she has regarding success by using the concept of leading by example in her interview. She stated, "I believe leadership is one where you not only just issue orders. The best leader is the one who leads by doing." Participant 8 also discussed this when she expressed, "I'm someone that was where they are right now you know.

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Because I wasn't always the best at my finances and I wasn't always as responsible and doing well with the money that I made. So, I think my leadership role I would describe it as having been there done that." She expressed that she builds relationships with her followers by telling them she understands where they are and where they want to be. Ultimately the sentiment of being able to build relationships and being a good example was expressed through interviews, highlighting the importance that relationships have for women entrepreneurial leaders. Throughout the interview with participant 12, the theme of leading by doing was expressed: "I'm definitely lead by example person and I expand my leading based on what others need me to show them in my role." Participant 18 also noted that leading by doing aligned with her leadership type. She said that her leadership is all about leading by taking action. She also observed that you must practice what you preach. Participant 14 stated, "People who are interested in what I'm doing or interested in how I'm carrying myself...the decisions that I make and they kind of just follow my lead." Participant 17 also expressed this theme when she stated, "I love helping other people relate to what I have experienced so they know they are not alone. Participant 6 stated, "My story always helps people know I am not above them, but I understand just where they are." Although it was not a main theme for many participants, many of the women participants expressed relating to this theme. As it relates to leading by doing, participant 11 stated, "I'm not going to tell you to go do something if I haven't already done it before." She followed up with "and I'll never ask you to do something that I wouldn't do myself." The data collected indicates the value female entrepreneurial leaders find in being an example to others and using that positive example to lead effectively.

Motivating others. Motivating others is the ability to use your leadership to help motivate others to action. Participant 14 stated, "I just learned to know my followers and learn

how they need to be motivated. What works for them? Do I need to, you know, give words to them? Do I need to be engaged with what it is that they're doing?" Participant 7 touched on her ability to use leadership to motivate others. She stated, "I encourage people all the time. I recently learned that my personality type is like a cheerleader personality type. Because of this, when I see somebody, I actually encourage people all the time." Participant 1 reported that she uses her role to help and encourage people all over. Participant 8 expressed the same sentiment that she too uses her leadership role to motivate, inspire, and empower others. Being able to motivate and encourage other people was a theme that the women participants related to. The participants expressed how motivating others was directly related to their leadership styles. This outcome helped the researcher to see that motivation was a key contributing factor to the women's leadership approach.

Taking charge. Taking charge is the ability to step in a take charge within a leadership role. Participant 7 related to the leadership style of taking charge when she stated, "I often walk into different places and take over, someone has to do it." As it relates to taking charge, participant 11 suggested that she will take over in order to show others an example of how it can be done. Women entrepreneurial leaders often lead by their behaviors and life examples to help them to relate to those whom they are leading. In the interview with participant 4, the importance of taking charge was also shown. She stated, "I come down to their level; however, I was where you were, I understand and I'm here too, I'm here to help you get to where I am or greater. I will show you how to get it done in my role as a leader by showing you the way and allowing you to mimic me taking over." Throughout the interviews, many of the women expressed not only a desire to take charge but the importance of it as well. With the results from

the participants, this has shown how the concept of taking charge is one of the themes that women relate to success.

Tuning into the needs of others. Tuning into the needs of others is the way that leaders learn to pay attention to their follower's desires and needs in order to lead more effectively. Participant 14 expressed the theme tuning into needs throughout her interview. As it relates to leading by doing she stated, "I don't push to be a leader, it kind of just happens that way." Women entrepreneurial leader's value being authentic and kind in their role. They seek to avoid being overly pushy and strict to be more effective within their leadership role. During her interview, participant 17, regarding tuning into the needs, stated, "so the leadership is being able to listen, being able to present myself as a good listener and synthesize information where they'll be able to understand to move forward." Participant 20 also spoke of the incorporation of tuning into needs. She stated, "I am definitely a leader that, I would say motivates, encourages, and I kind of take more of a team approach and I always make sure to tell others that I want to know where they are and what supports they need for success." The last theme that participant 18 shared was the ability to tune into needs. Participant 18 said, "I guess just kind of leading people where they are at, and allowing them to stretch, and giving them the space and the support to do it also." Participant 11 highlighted the theme of tuning into needs as she stated, "I'm very collaborative. And I have this ability to see people's potential, so I will ask them to tell me what they need to reach that potential." Participant 9 went on to say, "it's really important to be able to encourage, to give honest feedback also in a way that you know people can follow and learn." Participant 9 also observed that, as a leader, she listens to where her followers are, and they dream together to try to envision the outcome they desire. The information that was shared throughout the interviews allowed the researcher to note the importance of tuning into the needs

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of others as a theme that women relate to their leadership approach. Understanding this proved

the point that women find value in not only understanding others but tuning into the needs of

others as well.

Expert. Being an expert is having knowledge in relation to the realm in which an

individual is leading. Participant 8 expressed the theme of being an expert. She stated, "So my

clients can trust that I am very knowledgeable about what I know." Participant 8 noted that the

key for her has been expressing the ideas that are already affecting them or are already piercing

them in their lives right now. Participant 4 also aligned with the expert theme as she stated,

"You can be just as knowledgeable or more knowledgeable, have more credential or maybe even

less and you can, you're still able to get your point across to what you need to do… A leader is

one who takes what they know and uses it for their growth." Similarly, participant 10 stated:

> So I don't think that my tactic is one where I'm bringing them somewhere that they've
>
> never heard or felt or thought of…I'm really hitting the pain point of what their struggles
>
> are and so I don't find it difficult for them to accept my ideas….I really want to create a
>
> community of women that are sitting down and girl talking about money the same way
>
> that they would about their man, their kids, their shopping experience, their girlfriend or
>
> whatever.

Participant 1 also had similar experiences related to this theme when she expressed that

she leads by sharing her education and training, which allows those who she is leading to

understand the level of expertise she has. Participant 6 indicated that her experiences do not

make her perfect, but they do help her to understand and to some extent make her an expert if she

has experienced something first-hand. Based on the results from the interviews, having

knowledge and information is an important component of leadership style for women entrepreneurial leaders.

The findings of this research provided additional insight into the perspective that women have as it relates to leadership, entrepreneurship, and success. Based on personal experiences the women were able to give insight into their lives as women entrepreneurs and leaders. The results show that although there were many differences amongst women entrepreneurs and their experiences with leadership there were also commonalities. The experiences along with the perspectives and beliefs show that there is not a one-size-fits-all definition of leadership or success but that certain factors of leadership are perceived to influence success.

Focus groups. Two focus group sessions were conducted with the participants to gain more insight into the lived experiences of the women participants. The focus groups were broken into two separate groups to account for the scheduling preferences of the participants. As previously stated, focus group one included participants 1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 8, 10, 11, and 16. The second focus group had participants 7, 9, 12, 13, 14, 15, 17, 18, 19, and 20.

The themes expressed during the focus groups aligned with the themes expressed individually during the interviews. During session one, participant 6 indicated that success was measured by individuals who overall entrust you as a leader. Success for her was gauged from giving people a way to trust her. Participant 4 offered that, with her leadership style being creative, she likes to visualize success and bring her followers on board with her vision. She shared that this creative approach has allowed her to be more effective in her leadership role. Participant 1 expressed a common theme when stating, "Success feels good when I feel as if I am fulfilling my mission as far as when I am helping a client or when I am out discussing what I do, and it brings joy to people, and souls."

During focus group one the participants shared information about their leadership styles as it relates to taking charge and leading by doing. Participant 16 stated that "When I say I will do something I just do that some…thing." Participant 1 also shared that sentiment when she expressed, "it's simple just follow through with what you say." Participant 1 also stated, "making sure I set a vivid and positive example has allowed me to reach my people and be a better leader." The participants expressed views of success in relation to leadership as well. The sentiments shared also aligned with the results from the individual interviews. Participant 8 stated, "having a chance to change someone's life, changes my perspective." Participant 11 shared, "being in a position to make a difference has caused me to be so humble and excited at the same time. Finally, participant 16 stated that "given free time to do what I want has caused me to do more of what I love to leave a legacy." Ultimately, during focus group number one, the most common theme displayed for leadership was leading by doing. The theme for success was meaning making. Finally, for the impact on success in relation to leadership the most common theme shared was reaching goals. Each participant expressed the various theme in relation to the research questions in their own unique way, but there were some similarities amongst the results.

During the second focus group session, regarding leadership approaches Participant 7 stated, "I get excited and therefore I get my team excited with me." Participant 9 stated, "I always make sure I am open and honest, and I never change who I am because I want people to know the real me. Participant 20 discussed the value of staying informed, she said, "if I don't know what I should know how can I lead?" For the second focus group, regarding how to define success, participant 7 stated, "I would say success is receiving positive testimonials back, knowing that you are making a difference in people's lives and they can come to you for answers." Participant 10 expressed meaning making when she said, "I want people to know they

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can come to me for help and I will do my best to help them to make the change they desire to see." Participant 20 suggested that she wants to help people become more aware of who they are and the changes they desire to make to increase their success. During focus group session two, participant 19 expressed the importance of creating freedom. She stated, "in my old job there was so much red tape, I can be me now." Participant 17 shared this same sentiment when she stated, "I love being able to do what I desire and not have to make it make sense to anyone else." Participant 13 expressed her emotions when she stated, "I just love how my job makes me feel….I am just so proud of where I am at." Ultimately, during focus group two, the most common theme displayed for leadership was being an expert. The theme for success was meaning making. Finally, for the impact on success in relation to leadership the most common theme shared was freedom. Each participant expressed the various themes in their own unique way. The term success was viewed differently but closely aligned with the sentiments expressed in the individual interviews.

   Memoing. During each individual interview and during the focus group sessions, the researcher used the concept of memoing. During each session, the researcher used a memoing template (See Appendix E) to track highlights of information from the sessions. The researcher used common phrases or suggestions from the participants to note key points that were stated. For example, the participants expressed their desire to give to others and the researcher associated that with being selfless. This was written in each memo as the women continued to express this. The participants also expressed gratitude repeatedly throughout their interviews and in the focus groups. This was also noted on the memoing template. Finally, the women expressed the perceived impact they had on others and how their career choices were to increase

their perceived impact. This was also noted on the memoing template. Using these memos

helped the researcher to thoroughly analyze the data upon completion of collecting it.

With memoing, unstated words and concepts are also documented. The data that was

collected during the memoing sessions was extremely informative as it helped to highlight

unwritten and unstated words that helped inform the study. The researcher used memoing to

collect the information from the participants that were commonly expressed. The use of

memoing helped the researcher to analyze data along the collection process. There were

comments made by the participants that highlighted various experiences participants had and

their attitude toward those experiences.

Research question two which asked participants to describe the entrepreneurial success

resulted in five themes. Participant comments regarding their success were coded based on the

concept of success it related to. Each theme was highlighted, and quotes related to the theme

were pulled out. These categories were determined based on common expressions and

statements. The final themes were having a work-life balance, monetary, making a difference,

freedom, and emotions. Following each theme is discussed in depth.

Work-life balance. Work-life balance is being able to balance the responsibilities of

both work and personal life. For theme one of having a work-life balance, participant 3 related

that she is an advocate for mothers who run at high speeds due to being busy. In her role, she

helps them to find the balance they need for success. This sentiment was also expressed in

interviews about the amount that women in these roles must balance for success. Participant 5

and participant 11 also expressed this. Participant 5 stated that she likes to be "available for her

children and avoids burnout by overworking." Participant 11 noted that she has had to find a

balance in her life because the idea of prioritizing can be challenging and make one thing feel

less important than another. Reviewing these quotes related to this theme has made it evident that finding the balance between personal life and entrepreneurship is a very important component in relation to success for female entrepreneurial leaders.

Monetary. Theme two for research question two focused on a monetary definition of success meaning that having a certain amount of money is an important tool to determine success. This theme was supported by two of the participants. Participant 19 stated, "the goal would be to have two to three streams of income because for me I came from a single parent home and my mom she struggled and busted her butt every single day to make sure that my sister and I had the bare necessities, so for me success would be that total financial freedom. No debt, you know you have the emergency fund. You know you have a home that is yours and that will be the definition of success to me it doesn't necessarily come from one avenue." The data results indicated that although money was not the number one measuring tool for success it did prove to be important to the women involved with the study. Participant 11 stated, "Success to me is also financial and being able to support my family and being able to have the things that I want to have like one of my major goals is a new kitchen." While not every participant expressed money as a theme in relation to success the women who did share that money is important were able to exemplify why finances contribute or lead to success. The women were also able to share how they have used money as a tool to measure their success.

Making a difference. Theme number three is making a difference in the lives of others, meaning the ability to have a positive impact in some way on someone else. This theme was supported by responses from nine participants and was evident based on responses that it was very important. Participant 15 related that her goal is to help people as she was not supported or helped in the past. Participant 18 stated, "I will define success as being on my deathbed and

knowing that I did everything, that I wanted to do, the way I wanted to do it, I loved who I wanted to love, I made whatever money I wanted to make, and most of all that when I leave this earth, that I am leaving something behind that someone else can tangibly take, and do more greatness with." Participant 3 stated, "success is knowing that a goal has been achieved and just seeing that a person takes that step that they were not able to take before." Participant 4 stated, "my personal success is if I can have five people that each one of them has five goals on their list and they check mark all five within a year, to me that is success. I know I have done what it takes to help them. Participant 9 stated that success is "simply how much you can do to make a difference." Participant 20 stated, "I believe that success is I guess from the standpoint of an entrepreneur is being able to build an authentic brand, you know really having a brand that is true to who you are and being able to create massive impact." Participant 14 stated, "If you touched a lot of people but you know by your words or just, you know, who you are and what you bring to the table, then you're successful." Participant 11 stated that "success is doing something that is contributing to the world every day and having an impact. Finally, participant 10 observed that success is when you are making progress the things you do and working on something with people that has a purpose. The theme of making a difference was expressed by almost half of the participants. Based on their responses and information shared it is evident that having the ability to make a difference is a quality that ranks highly amongst female entrepreneurial leaders in relation to the beliefs about being successful.

Freedom. Theme number four related to success was achieving freedom of various types. Freedom was a term that was vague in definition as it related to work, but each participant defined freedom uniquely based on what they desired to accomplish. For this theme, the ability to have more time to dedicate to desires was a big theme in relation to success. The

entrepreneurs with less than two years in their current role expressed how many jobs held them back and prevented them from being present in their day to day lives. They expressed the importance of breaking away from those jobs in order to achieve freedom in their lives. Based on the participation in this study, 30% of the women expressed this theme. Participant 8 stated, "I honestly don't believe a corporate six-figure job is going to do it for me because the whole idea of having the say can't you know I got a punch in or I got a request time off or just taking my kids to a doctor or sorry I can't come in today like the whole thing, I'm so over it." Participant 10 stated, "success is being able to do what I want, when I want, whenever I want to. That is really what it really is. If I want to go on a cruise in two weeks I can be like cool." Finally, participant 16 observed that success is having the ability to travel with people that she loves and not have to be concerned about where she needs to be. Working a typical 9-5 can require a lot of an individual's time. The women in this study expressed the desire to not only free up their time but to instead be able to use their time on things that they find valuable. Having freedom in relation to time is a concept that was discussed often in relation to success. This discussion highlights the importance of freedom and increasing it as a way to prove to be successful.

Emotion. Lastly, emotion was the final theme that was discussed related to success. This theme was focused on how the women feel about their entrepreneurial and leadership roles. Four of the women participants highlighted emotion in response to their view of success. To ignore a theme expressed by four individuals could mean overlooking a theme that could be common within the general population. Participant 22 stated, "Success for me, is, number one: am I happy? You know, my overall sense of well- being is a huge part of my success." Participant 19 reported that success is the ability to be mentally and physically stable.

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Participant 17 stated, "Having my peace without having to minimize it for anybody. I want my peace. I've been working with "my peace" as it relates to her view on success. Participant 6 observed that success to her is different than what it means to other people. Her definition of success is "loving God." These women were able to be transparent and share all of the emotions that they have attached to their roles. This data together allowed the researcher to confirm that emotions do in fact have a role as it relates to success.

Presentation of the Data and Results

The research questions for this study focused on common concepts in the participant's leadership experiences, their beliefs about leadership, and their experiences as it related to their view of success. It was assumed that each of the participants answered in a way that was both honest and true to their beliefs and feelings. The three research questions were used to help the researcher gauge themes amongst the results from the data that was gathered. Upon completion of data collection, interviews were analyzed for common themes. The results were then presented to highlight what was discovered through the research. The qualitative data obtained during data collection was broken analyzed based on the three research questions. In this section, the common themes for each research question are thoroughly explored.

Research question one asked how women entrepreneurs describe their leadership experiences as business entrepreneurs. The main themes that emerged from the data related to leadership styles and the experiences that the women had with those styles of leadership. The themes that emerged were related to transformational leadership, managerial leadership as well as fluid leadership. However, the majority of the themes identified were related to transformational leadership. The descriptions of the data that resembled these leadership styles were women who expressed the desire to give back and support others. The views of their

experiences were outside experiences and not related to the effect it had on the participants personally, but instead the overall perceived impact their experiences and leadership have on others. This was exemplified through the concepts that were presented in a majority of the interviews regarding tuning into other's needs, motivating others, making a difference, and leading by example. These themes all highlight the experiences the women had in relation to giving to others. Participant 17 discussed an experience and how her leadership style played a role stating, "I learned to lead by allowing my life to be an example to others." Participant 4 reported that she desired to leave a legacy for the generations after her. Participant 6 noted that she enjoys making a difference in women's lives in their most difficult time. These are examples of the transcribed interview of women who are using their role and their experiences and using them to have a positive influence on others. Through the data, the researcher was able to identify patterns regarding the desire to give back and help others across several interviews. The way women implement the concept of giving back and helping others is different and unique for each individual. The commonality was the desire to use their experiences to give back. After analyzing the data, the results indicated that women's experiences within leadership vary based on their current role but the concepts regarding leadership are similar.

Research question two asked how women entrepreneurs describe their success. Table 3 shows the various ways success is viewed based on the themes presented throughout the interviews and focus groups. The table also highlights the number of participants who related to each theme. As noted on the table, the theme that was most popular amongst the participant was the opportunity to make a difference to others. This theme was expressed by 80% (16) of the participants. Another theme commonly expressed by participants was being true to both yourself and others. This theme was expressed 60% of the time (12 participants). Reaching goals was a

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concept that the participants expressed relating to as well as the idea of reaching goals was shared amongst 50% (10) of the participants.

Table 3

Women Entrepreneurs Views of Success

Views of success ($N = 20$)	N	%
Make a difference to others	16	80
True to self and values	12	60
Reach goals	10	50
Positive quality of life	9	45
Make money, achieve financial freedom	5	25
Freedom to make rules and choices	4	20
Achieve work-family balance	3	15

The women in the study expressed having the qualities of a positive life as important to them. This was expressed by 45% (9) of the participants. The theme of making money and achieving more freedom financially was expressed by 25% (5) of the participants. The women also expressed relating to freedom to make rules and choices and this was expressed by 20% (4) of the participants. The theme that was least reported but was still related to by more than one participant was a work-family balance; in total, 15% (3) of the participants expressed relating to this theme.

In summary, most participants mentioned that success involved making a difference to others. 60% percent of participants also said success involved acting in ways that were true to self or reaching goals. Participants who were coaches/consultants indicated that success involved reaching goals. Additionally, almost half of the participants said success involved being able to live in a way that was emotionally positive and involved good quality of life. Participants also indicated that success involved making money or having financial freedom, having the freedom to make rules and choices, and achieving work-family balance.

Research question three sought to gain the perspective of women entrepreneurs regarding how leadership style impacts their success. The participants in the study all expressed that their leadership approach has a positive perceived impact on their overall success. Table 4 provides the number of times a participant discussed each theme. The first theme expressed by the participants in relation to their leadership style and the perceived impact it has on success was making a difference. This theme was expressed in 13 interviews. Participant 6 stated, "Leadership is an inspirational role." Participant 19 followed up by stating "my biggest goal was always to give back and help others and this is exactly what I am able to do." Participant 6 stated, "I just want to change lives that is what I am called to do." Theme number two was creating a positive environment. This was expressed in four interviews. Participant 6 stated, "being a leader gives me a chance to change the world." Participant 7 expressed similar sentiments when stating "I have a chance to implement change as a leader and I love every moment of it." These statements are examples of quotes that the participants have associated with their leadership style and the perceived relationship it has to success.

Table 4

Women Entrepreneurs Views of Impact on Success in Relation to their Leadership Style

Views of success (N=20)	*N*	%
Make a difference to others	13	65
Positive quality of life	4	20
Freedom	4	20
Emotions	4	20

The theme of freedom and creativity leadership style and the perceived impact on success was expressed through the third theme of freedom. This was expressed in four interviews as well. Participant 6 expressed this when she said, "I know that my behavior and my characteristics are representative of who I am as a person and the example I set. I also know as a

leader it is important that people can relate and respect you. Therefore, I use Jesus as an example and make sure that my characteristics align with the values that most would respect." Participant 17 stated, "Becoming a leader was the first career choice allowing me to just be me." Participant 8 stated, "I love being a leader because it allows me to have more freedom with my choices." Participant 9 expressed this theme when she stated, "I think being creative has helped me reach more people as a modern-day African American leader." Four participants expressed the fourth theme regarding emotions. They expressed feeling positive emotions in relation to the success they have within their specific leadership style. Participant 13 stated, "my role excites me." Participant 1 stated, "When I think of how I lead I feel proud to do what I do." These statements highlight the view that the women entrepreneurs have regarding their leadership styles and experiences and the effect it has on their success.

The women that participated in this study expressed various characteristics that they relate to their leadership style. These characteristics included creating a vision to implement change, being inspirational, and supporting their subordinates. The participants were unable to define a specific leadership style by name but instead associated specific characteristics with the success they believed to have achieved. They shared that the behaviors and characteristics that they possessed in their individual roles had a positive effect on the success they had in their business. No participants expressed a negative relationship between success and leadership style directly.

Participants also reported on their leadership styles and could mention more than one aspect of their leadership. One of the most commonly reported styles involved the use of expertise and was like the intellectual stimulation component of transformational leadership style which in turn was linked to greater success because the approach had more impact when

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transforming others. This style of leadership included expressing a vision for performance, bringing people together to communicate and expand the sense of vision, structuring tasks so clients learned to perform them, and holding clients accountable for performance. Participants with this style also tended to define success as being able to tune into the needs of others. Although success can be defined differently by participants, the themes of this research show that there are commonalities amongst women entrepreneurial leaders and the way in which they view success. The concepts that the women expressed regarding their success relates back to the transformational leadership style and how it is implemented within their businesses.

Summary

Although women may have different roles within their businesses, there are many commonalities amongst women entrepreneurs. First, the women in the current study expressed characteristics that are aligned with the transformational leadership approach and agreed that these characteristics do play a role in their overall success. The women all expressed beginning entrepreneurship for a reason other than themselves. They have used life experiences to expand and give back to others. Through collecting of information during the open-ended interviews and focus groups, the findings of this study helped to provide insight into the lived experiences of women leaders and entrepreneurs. The findings highlighted their perspectives as it relates to success as well.

Chapter 4 included detailed information about the women participants. Chapter 4 also provided the most common themes that were extracted from the data collection process, which included true to self and others, making a difference, positive quality of life, make money, achieving work-family balance and freedom.

Following in Chapter 5, the reported results will be discussed. Chapter 5 will discuss the data that was collected throughout this research, and how the results may be used to inform future studies. Chapter 5 will also compare former research with this current study to assess how the current study supports past research in the field. Lastly, the limitations and recommendations from this research will be reviewed and discussed.

Chapter 5: Discussion and Conclusion

This study was initially guided by the researcher's life both as an entrepreneur as well as a leader. The purpose of the current research was to explore how women entrepreneurs describe and interpret their leadership styles, to understand how women view their success, and to explore if women entrepreneurial leaders perceive leadership style to have an impact on success. This study employed transformational leadership, organizational leadership, and servant leadership to further explore the leadership experiences of the participants as the researcher produced a synthesis of concepts and perspectives drawn from various sources. The leadership theories helped to inform the researcher of experiences, traits, styles, and behaviors.

Chapter 5 is a discussion of the research and the outcome, and a compilation of the research, data, and results from the previous chapters to explain the data collected. In this chapter, the researcher will process the results from the current study evaluate and explore the results for further significance. Connections will be made to inform future literature and to add new information, education, and knowledge to the community of scholars as well as entrepreneurs. This chapter will also highlight the ways in which the data relates to previous research in the field. The limitations of this study will be discussed. In addition, a discussion will take place regarding ways in which future researchers could apply the current study's finding to enhance research regarding women entrepreneurs and leaders.

Summary of Results

The researcher sought to better understand the way in which women entrepreneurs view leadership, success, and the way they perceive leadership to influence entrepreneurial success. By allowing transformational, organizational, and servant leadership theories to guide the research, this study revealed experiences that women entrepreneurial leaders associated with

their leadership style and success. According to Parker and Van-Praag (2010), women entrepreneurs and success are topics that should be explored further to inform future studies and gain more understanding. Former research indicates that the percentage of women in leadership roles has increased over the years yet there is still a smaller representation of women in literature (Dyke & Murphy, 2006).

The exploratory questions that directed this study were:

1. How do women entrepreneurs describe their leadership experiences as entrepreneurs?

2. How do women entrepreneurs describe their success as entrepreneurs?

3. From the perspective of women entrepreneurs, what impact does leadership styles have on their entrepreneurial success?

Regarding research question one, the various participants expressed their leadership experiences through characteristics. Two of the characteristics that women expressed in relation to their leadership style was being an expert or taking charge in their role. These characteristics were associated with the experiences that the women had in their individual roles. The participants interpreted these experiences and actions as part of their role as a leader and a contributing factor to their overall success within that role. Women entrepreneurs both describe and interpret their leadership experience as transformational leadership. With this theory, the leadership style is transformative in nature meaning changing the dynamics of those being led. This position was observed as the participants expressed concepts relating to that of transformational leadership.

Research question two was used to inform the researcher of the description of success women had with their entrepreneurial experiences. Success was a term that was defined differently by each participant, but common themes were expressed. For this study, the theme

that was expressed the most often was being able to make a difference. The theme that was expressed second to that was being able to be true to their values. A commonality with the themes was that each theme related to giving to others, which was rated highly for women in leadership roles. Each of these themes is connected to servant leadership theory. This is also confirmed by the participants using characteristics associated with serving in their leadership approach leading to their success. The position was observed as the participants shared tangible examples of them serving those whom they lead. The participants reported focusing on giving back and helping other people.

Regarding research question three, participants all indicated that leadership style does have a positive impact on leadership success. The participants expressed being able to identify specific characteristics that they knew helped increase their success within their roles. Although the characteristics were not matched to one specific leadership style, the women expressed those characteristics that aligned closely with transformational leadership theory. The participants reported using characteristics associated with organizational, transformational, and servant leadership within their interviews which aligned with the conceptual framework guiding this study. These leadership styles were displayed when the participants expressed feeling the desire to have an impact on others, and their willingness to give back to their community and organization.

Discussion of the Results

Data was gathered through a qualitative phenomenological data collection process. With a phenomenological approach, it can never be guaranteed that the outcome is correct, but this approach allows insight into the meaning that the participants give to the concept (Reeves et al., 2008). Phenomenology helps to bring to the forefront the experience and perceptions of the

women entrepreneurs from their own perspective. The women participants completed individual interviews and focus groups to help gain more insight into their lived experiences.

Women-owned businesses are growing rapidly (Small Business Administration, 2010) and therefore more research is needed, and the current study attempted to add to the literature in the field. According to Mahanta (2016), research regarding women entrepreneurs has been limited. Murphey et al. (2005) conducted a study regarding women experiences in leadership roles. Research results indicated that the role of a woman in her leadership position is complex and is most often influenced by her gender along with her life experiences (Murphey et al., 2005). In the current study, the researcher was able to explore experiences that the women had and concluded that experiences with success were related to life experiences and unique leadership roles.

In a study conducted by Abrams (1977), men and women were compared along with the way in which they viewed success. This study uncovered, for example, that men often view their success by the accumulation of money or good luck with business outcomes. Women by contrast, often have external views or very multi-faceted views regarding success. For example, a woman's lack of self-expectations can affect the ability to pursue success, as they personally define it. All the participants in the current study reported success based upon whether the women believed they achieved success. Abrams results indicated that women use differing views than their male counterparts to determine their level of success.

Leadership is a contextual concept. Radu, Deaconu, and Corina Frăsineanu (2017) noted that researchers should focus on whether people are capable of leading and their characteristics and should disregard their gender as that is not the determining factor. Radu et al. stated there are two types of leadership "masculine and feminine—, but it is also important to add that the differences are not a result of the gender by itself and in fact refer to human traits that are only traditionally

attributed to men and/or women" (p.64). The researchers also stated that the characteristics of women, empathy, and communication, are the contributing factors helping to increase their effectiveness within leadership roles. Radu et al. stated that researchers should try to better understand women in their leadership as they have characteristics that successfully help business ventures.

Vaccaro (2011) highlighted that women are not as successful as their male counterparts as a result of sexism; not as a result of actual performance. The current study highlighted that women found themselves to be successful based on the way they individually defined success. The women in the study reported working diligently and identified many experiences wherein which they went above and beyond for clients and partners to ensure business success. This aligns with Vaccaro's (2011) findings, illustrating that women report having to work two times as hard if they ever want to be considered more successful than the men who are in the same role.

The current study highlighted that women entrepreneurial leader's view and interpret success differently. Although the participants all had different lived experiences and different professional roles, their experiences highlighted many similarities. For example, the participant's measured entrepreneurial success in financial terms but also suggested that "making a difference" was an elusive, but overarching focus for their motivation. In this study, the women participants discussed different experiences they had in their own jobs as well as in their leadership role. Northouse (2013) noted that there are many views regarding characteristics as well as experiences that shape a leader. The women discussed how their nuanced experiences helped them determine how to interact with and lead others.

Success was a concept that was also studied throughout this research. Dyke and Murphy (2006) reported that most of the former research on success has been focused on outside

measures of success, such as salary. There is a growing recognition among researchers, however, that it is important also to understand internal success, such as satisfaction with your business and your role.

In this study, the view and definition of success were reviewed more in-depth. Previous research has shown how challenging it is to define success as a woman due to success being defined typically using masculine terms (Abrams, 1977). More than half of the participants said that success involved acting in ways that were true to self or reaching goals, which contradict the former research success terms defined by men (Abrams, 1977). Specifically, the individual interviews with the women research participants highlighted how they defined success more personally.

Participants who were coaches/consultants were especially likely to say success involved reaching a goal. Almost half of participants noted that success involved being able to live in a way that was emotionally positive and involved good quality of life. One common theme of success was also related to money. Some of the women participants said that success involved making money and/or having financial freedom. Each participant who defined their success in financial terms also had a personal measure of success as well. Some examples that they gave related to freedom as to be able to be involved with their family more. When analyzing this data, it was evident that women value having autonomy over their priorities and being able to customize their entrepreneurial experiences to match those priorities.

Analysis of the data indicated and confirmed that success is a unique measure, but there is no one size fits all outcome for success. Over the last few years, much research has been conducted in relation to women in managerial or leadership positions. Shahtalebi, Yarmohammadian and Ajami (2011) noted that women's 'soft skills also related to emotional

approaches and are more needed than ever. In the recent years, more women have appeared as successful leaders due to their soft skills, a sign of more people understanding the approach women leaders use (Shahtalebi, et al., 2011). If an individual is permitted to define her own success, she will be more likely to accomplish the business goal and simultaneously recognize the experience as a success. Based on participant interview responses, the outcome indicated beliefs about success stemmed from personal experiences within their current business and former jobs. The experiences that the women had that were unique to them, in turn, allowed them to develop a definition of success also unique to them.

Discussion of the Results in Relation to the Literature

The dearth of literature that exists regarding women entrepreneurial leaders and their view of success engendered this research study. Pflanz (2011) observed that women roles in leadership are increasing, although former research lacks research complimenting this idea. As women-filled roles are increasing it becomes more important to research and understand various aspects of the phenomenon. McElwee and Al-Riyami (2003) proposed that women as entrepreneurial leaders could potentially be studied, which served as a foundation for the current study.

Podjasek (2009) began with an inquiry and interest in the ways that women regard their leadership and how that self-definition determines how successful a woman will be in their business. Many of the women discussed their experiences with leadership and how they changed that around for those they lead. The past literature indicated that women's success was never thoroughly defined nor examined (Dyke & Murphy, 2006). The results from the current study expanded on this to highlight how women entrepreneurs view their success versus former literature that was focused on gender comparisons. Although gender discrimination does exist, it

does not affect the experiences women have as entrepreneurial leaders. Regardless of the discrimination that is prevalent, women entrepreneurial leader attitudes are not altered as it relates to their opportunity to achieve success. With these results, the information may help to inform future practices related to women in leadership.

Schoon and Duckworth (2012) and Jang (2013) completed research and highlighted that there was a correlation between transformational leadership style and the career success of women in nonprofit organizations. Similarly, women in the current study expressed characteristics aligned with transformational leadership and those who did reported more positive views of success. Based on former research, more women leaders align themselves with the transformational leadership style more than any other style (Appelbaum et al., 2013). This was evident in the current study as well with most participants reporting characteristics of transformational leadership.

Overall, the findings from this current study support those found in previous research studies discussed in Chapter 2. Kotter (1990) reported that success and leadership styles could potentially be related to one another and went to discover that there was indeed a relationship between the two. Prior literature on women in leadership focused on the gender comparisons. Success has not been a topic of much discussion. To further the understanding of this concept, the researcher used former studies as a foundation on which to build and to better understand the lived experiences of women entrepreneurial leaders. Although Pflanz (2011) highlighted the glass ceiling barrier, Pflanz reported that women can find their own success despite any potential barriers. Baxter and Olin-Wright (2000) stated, "Taken literally, the metaphor of the 'glass ceiling' implies the existence of an impermeable barrier that blocks the vertical mobility of women: Below the barrier, women are able to get promoted; beyond this barrier, they are not" (p.

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275). Finally, Hoeritz (2013) confirmed the idea that women's contributions should be incorporated into organizations, which would impact their success positively. Women in leadership roles often have similar views as it relates to success. The women participants also have overlapping leadership experiences that have played a role in the characteristics they exhibit as a leader. The findings from this current study are important because they give insight into the lived experiences of women entrepreneurial leaders. The current study also informs future studies as to how these women view success and leadership.

As an entrepreneur and doctoral student, the researcher has been intrigued to learn about the entrepreneur world. The best way to learn is through former research and by meeting with women who have had various experiences as it relates to being a leader and an entrepreneur. Going in depth to learn more about the experiences that women entrepreneurs have helped the researcher as a women entrepreneur learn how to relate to the participants. By experiencing leadership firsthand, the researcher was well informed enough to know that each participant would have a definition that fit their experiences and lifestyle.

Limitations

Based on the methodology of the current study, there are limitations and areas that should be highlighted. Limitations are challenging because no matter how hard the researcher tries they are usually out of the researcher's control (Simon & Goes, 2013). One limitation was the self-reported data that the participants provided during both the focus groups and the individual interviews. The information provided had to be taken as honest responses and experiences. Due to this, the self-reported data could affect the interpretation of the results.

In addition, since many women were recruited from the same online Facebook group and all participated in face-to-face interviews and focus groups, anonymity could not be guaranteed.

As a limitation, the participants may have been fearful that their answers could disclose their identity and therefore it could have affected the honesty of their answers.

Finally, the women who participated in this study were between the ages of 25-44 only. This is a limited segment of women entrepreneurs. Therefore, the results of this data may not be generalizable to the overall population and the results of this study may only be informative to millennial women entrepreneurs.

Another limitation of this study may be that the data analysis was completed by hand. Analyzing data by hand aligns with the value of qualitative researchers being intimate with the data to be sure the researcher thoroughly understands it. However, analyzing data by hand can expose various errors and mistakes. With this route of data analysis, there is an opportunity for errors and mistakes. Additionally, qualitative studies use the researcher as a data collection instrument, which leads to certain inherent limitations such as bias. Bias is defined as any influence that provides a distortion in the results of a study (Polit & Beck, 2014). Researchers are fallible and, therefore avoiding bias may be impossible.

According to Simon and Goes (2013), despite the volumes of prior research, there are always ways in which research can be improved or altered to continue providing more insight. This study could be strengthened by studying more women participants over a longer period of time, this concept is also known as a longitudinal study. This would allow the researcher to be able to verify that the material and information the participants are presenting regarding their success are consistent with what the participants report. Also, to strengthen the study the researcher could potentially choose from a larger population, expanding the research subject to community groups of women and not necessarily online. The increase in a study's participation rates also reduces the likelihood that the participants know one another. Finally, after

completing this research and gaining more insight into the lived experiences of these women, it may be helpful to expand the research to include both younger and older women entrepreneurs. Changing the age range of the participants would allow for more opportunity to generalize the findings to other age groups.

Implications of the Results for Practice, Policy, and Theory

Research regarding women entrepreneurial leaders has been substantially limited due to the number of women within those roles (Kobia & Sikalieh, 2010). This research was conducted to bring more awareness to the topic of women entrepreneurial leaders. The research was also conducted to increase insight into the expanding leadership and entrepreneurship roles that women hold. It is intended that the results help to inform future research as well as current and aspiring women leaders and entrepreneurs.

Implications of results for practice. The main aim of this study was to provide awareness and insight into the lived experiences of women entrepreneurs and their view and interpretation of leadership and success. Dyke and Murphy (2006) reported that not all women entrepreneurs are considered successful, so additional research is needed to understand what makes some women successful and others unsuccessful. According to McElwee and Al-Riyami (2003), approximately 40% of women believe that having more women in top leadership positions in business as well government would improve the quality of life for all women. In further interviews, an additional 40% of women said that more women in top business and governmental positions would have at least some positive effect on all women's lives. In the current study, the women participants all shared their views on success and the differences were explored. Participant responses explained that the views of success by women leaders vary but all have common themes. Regarding leadership practice, it was evident that not every woman

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has the same approach to leadership (Chin, 2004). Based on views and experiences, women interpret and implement leadership differently. The way in which they lead is also based on themes that they value (Branche, 2014). Every participant was different, but there were commonalities that surfaced through the interviews. Participant responses allowed the researcher to report that women find value in strong relationships. For example, several participants expressed relation to the concept of tuning into other's needs, and these women felt that this was a very important aspect of their leadership. Analysis of the participant responses clarified that these women place a significantly high value on being able to tune into the needs of others and how this contributes to their views of success.

The information from this current study could be used for aspiring entrepreneurs to better understand the role of being both a leader and an entrepreneur. This information may also help former leaders and entrepreneurs to understand the way in which experiences affect leadership. Exploring the various definitions of success could help women better understand the pursuit of success. The results from this study may also inform future leadership practice to expand out and include women's approaches to leadership. Rieger (2012) states that it is important to understand the leadership style and the impact it has on success. Jang (2013) highlighted that transformational leadership is the style of leadership that increases success. Jang indicated that the characteristics can be learned and applied to increase the success that leaders of the future have.

Implications of results for policy. As the number of women in leadership roles increases, more insight into the role is needed (Janus, 2008). Berry and Franks (2010) highlighted that women-owned businesses are the fastest growing segment of our economy. A vast amount of research has been conducted regarding women and leadership due to the rise in

their roles as leaders (Flood, 2007). Transformational leadership was the approach most of the women related to, based on the demands of their jobs and the responsibilities they take on. Many women entrepreneurs respond to the demands of responsibilities; therefore, they may find it helpful to adhere to some characteristics that align with transformational leadership.

This current research assisted with the opportunity to gain more insight into the day-to-day experiences of entrepreneurs. Due to this research being qualitative in nature, it does not mean that the results can be transferred to all populations, but the study does help to bring more awareness to understanding entrepreneurial and leadership styles. It would be helpful to determine how the women learn and implement their characteristics that align with the transformational leadership approach. It could also be beneficial to identify how the barriers may influence the implementation of the theory with women entrepreneurs (Flood, 2007). There has not been a fair response toward women in leadership (McElwee & Al-Riyami, 2003). These barriers often prevent women from being given leadership roles as often as their male counterparts are. Dean (2015) reported that women are as capable as men at being leaders and research has confirmed this. With leadership studies continuing to expand, the contribution of this study to policy is to bring awareness to the field and to provide future researchers with information that will help to expand the field of leadership.

With leadership style having an impact on success, it is important for policy to understand the type of leadership style that is most successful. Women in business are growing more each day and continue to affect the growing economy. According to Dean (2015), understanding that leadership plays a role in entrepreneurial success will help to bring awareness going forward to the way in which leadership is implemented.

Implications of results for theory. As stated in Chapter 2, Bass (1981) argued that because leadership theory and its practices are continually evolving, scholars need to be willing to challenge the leadership paradigm. Chin (2004) promoted the importance of transforming the views of leadership in general; therefore, it will be better understood when the leadership approach has been adjusted or changed. Scholars also need to be willing to broaden the definition of leadership (Flood, 2007). Using the transformational leadership theory, the researcher explored characteristics that women participants related to their leadership experiences. Bullough (2008) stated, "There is little research on women leaders using a multilevel, cross-cultural perspective, and very few studies propose theory that is applicable outside the samples or settings being investigated" (p. 3). The results of this study could contribute to existing theory and literature, especially regarding both women in leadership and women entrepreneurs. It is also expected that this study could contribute to entrepreneurship disciplines, as the results highlight characteristics that women implement that they believe contribute in a positive manner to entrepreneurial success.

Kotter (1990) observed that effective leadership, when combined with competent management, has the potential to produce extraordinary business successes. The women in the current study shared how they combined their leadership characteristics with management options and also discussed how these skills worked together to increase overall success. The three theories that guided this study were transformational leadership, servant leadership, and organizational leadership. With transformational leadership, Appelbaum et al. (2013) highlighted that women leaders associated themselves with transformational leadership the most out of all leadership styles. The women who participated in this study believed that this form of leadership has the greatest perceived impact on the women whom the leaders are leading as well

as their overall success. Organizational leadership is said to be transformative in nature.

Organizational leadership occurs when leaders create an organized plan in their business to help

it develop and, in following the plan, increase their overall success (Bass & Avolio, 1994).

Servant leadership is also thought to be transformative in nature because the leader is serving

others first to be able to lead effectively (Northouse, 2007). The current study helped to inform

the transformational leadership theory as it allows scholars to understand that women are more

inclined to implement leadership characteristics that align with the transformational leadership

approach.

Leadership is a commonly discussed concept as is evident based on leadership being

implemented across cultures, communities, and vocations (Northouse, 2013). This research

helped bring awareness to leadership styles, ideas, and characteristics. Introducing new

leadership ideas and characteristics could possibly influence current or future entrepreneurs to

change a current leadership paradigm. Leadership is a critical term when defining

entrepreneurial success. According to Still et al. (2005), success is an important component of

leadership, particularly since success is often the goal of an entrepreneur. It is imperative that

the entrepreneur community expands current research to include women, and that the research

incorporates differing views of success, something that was not previously considered in former

research (Thébaud, 2010).

Recommendations for Further Research

Women entrepreneurs and their entrepreneurial pursuits make up a rapidly growing

segment in the business world. Creating new ventures helps contribute to the development of

society (Hattab, 2012). Findings from the present study provide insight into the personal and

lived experiences of women entrepreneurial leaders. Based on the findings from this study, recommendations and future research ideas are proposed.

Regarding future research, there are many new concepts that could be incorporated into a new study. Studies have shown that different demographics may play a role in entrepreneurial pursuit and success (Chaudhary, 2017). Chaudhary stated that it may be beneficial when completing research to expand and include women entrepreneurs of all ages. Therefore, expanding the age range of participants may help to bring more awareness to what women of various ages believe to be related to success and could potentially change the results. Additionally, it would be beneficial to gain more insight into the experiences of entrepreneurs at various stages within their entrepreneurial journey as this could help to strengthen the research on this topic.

The women in this study identified success that is not always easily measured, such as making a difference (Chin, 2004). It would be beneficial to get a better understanding of how they determine if they met that success goal, as opposed to this study which focused on defining success, rather than measured whether success is actually achieved. Such information may help other entrepreneurs and aspiring entrepreneurs to better understand how to implement their own success measures. This would also help the study participants become more reflective on their choices and the outcome and therefore there may be more shared regarding their reflection impacting the results of the study. Parker and Van-Praag (2010) discussed the importance of focusing on the issues that impact women in entrepreneurial roles and success appears to be one of the issues.

In the future, a study should separate different business types to compare the views of leadership style regarding success. For example, a future study could focus on women who are

entrepreneurs in a brick and mortar setting compared to those working in an online setting. Businesses run differently based upon how they are structured so it may be beneficial to compare and contrast the two different formats for entrepreneurship. Future research should also focus on practical issues regarding the women who have a desire to become entrepreneurs (Parker & Van-Praag, 2010). Future research could also focus on leadership development and mentorship as a component to leadership growth. According to Robinson (2017), leadership development research can help to provide insights as to how women can continue to grow as leaders. According to Robinson (2017), there are several aspects that impact authentic leadership.

An additional suggestion for future research would be to incorporate larger numbers of women participants in hopes of obtaining more insight and different experiences which could potentially expand the results and conclusions. This study was limited to a small number of women and may not be easily applicable to other groups of people. The results from this study may not be generalized and could potentially change with more feedback from additional women. Using a larger sample size of participants could potentially inform scholars and entrepreneurs with additional insight into the lived experiences of women entrepreneurial leaders. Although generalizability is not usually something that is expected with qualitative research, this topic would be beneficial to transfer to the general population at large (Silverman, 2009).

It may also be beneficial for future researchers to longitudinally study the women entrepreneurs to determine how views and experiences change over time. According to Christmann and Badgett (2008), the advantage of performing longitudinal studies is to highlight patterns and changes. Christmann and Badgett indicated that long-term studies help to bring

more awareness to the topic and more insight into the long-term impact of concepts being studied.

Finally, it may also be ideal to use a quantitative approach for future research. This would allow for comparing the differences and similarities of women leaders' in a statistical manner. Quantitative research can also include more participants, extending this type of research to more of the population. In addition, relationships and cause and effect may be assessed as well regarding the concepts of leadership and success.

According to Villasana et al. (2016), women engaging in entrepreneurship are becoming acknowledged as valuable resources in the business world. Stereotypical feminine behavior is traditionally associated with non-leadership or support roles (Bosak & Sczesny, 2008), but should be expanded and looked at with more respect. There should be more research done to gain insight into the valuable contribution of entrepreneurship. Adler (1997) reported that men and women distinctions have been overgeneralized regarding leadership and to understand further, there must be more exploration. As the number of women in leadership positions increases, it is imperative that entrepreneurs understand the perspective of these women. This will happen through more research and discussion on the topic. Although some research has been conducted as it relates to women entrepreneurial leaders, a review of the literature from this research indicates that not enough research has been conducted regarding the success of women in their leadership and entrepreneurial roles. More research on this topic may have implications for how women manifest their leadership characteristics in their business.

In the future, several other factors should be considered when analyzing the styles of women leaders. These factors could include the gender difference between males and females and the ways that each gender views leadership. According to Soriano (2016), regarding

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women's leadership style, the majority of researchers agree that women and men lead in noticeably different manners. In addition, the factor of, long-term success and any changes that come with that could be researched further. When new factors of leadership are considered, the outlook becomes more complex (Chin, 2004).

Conclusion

In the last decade, the number of women in leadership roles has increased (Flood, 2007). The current research sought to further explore the leadership experiences of women entrepreneurs. Upon review of the existing literature, it was evident that gaps in entrepreneurship research exist, making it challenging to understand women entrepreneur experiences (Baum et al., 2007). According to Taylor and Stein (2014), minimal research has explored the ways that generational differences could potentially shape women perspectives about leadership. Therefore, further exploration is necessary. This current study explored the lived experiences of women leaders as it relates to their entrepreneurial success and individual experiences.

The focus of the current study was on leadership and success; bother are topics challenging to thoroughly define. With this study, the researcher explored the way in which women entrepreneurs and leaders both define and view their leadership characteristics and personal success. The women participants reported avoiding outside measures to define success but instead used their own personal definition. Individual definitions of success guided each participant on her entrepreneurial leader journey. The study also attempted to explore the perceived impact that leadership style has on success. The researcher focused on transformational leadership, organizational leadership, and servant leadership. In this study, the researcher highlighted how the leadership theories relate to women's overall success. From the

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current research, discoveries were made regarding what key characteristics women believed to be related to their success. These key characteristics were a belief in themselves, having a relationship with others, and making a difference. The findings regarding the lack of research with women entrepreneurs in leadership roles helped to guide this current study to focus on women in both leadership and entrepreneurship.

Chapter 5 concluded the research study and provided information to summarize the findings of Chapter 4 as well as former research. There is more to be discovered related to the topic of women leaders and their entrepreneurial success in order to continue to support the growth (Cody, 2017). After all, entrepreneurship is important to the economy overall (Tomos et al., 2015). Due to the importance of entrepreneurship within the economy, women entrepreneurial leadership and success should be a topic of further exploration to determine what contributes to making women successful in this realm.

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Appendix A: Pilot Interview Questions

1. Can you tell me about your business?

2. How long have you been in business?

3. How do you define your leadership?

4. Name of leadership style? If not a name description.

5. What characteristics make you that type of leader?

6. How does it feel when people refer to you as a leader?

7. What is the difference between a leader and manager?

8. How have you gained commitment from your employees? Or clients?

9. Tell me about the experiences you have had from working with other people.

10. What is your greatest strength as an entrepreneur?

11. What is your greatest weakness as an entrepreneur?

12. How do you get others to accept your ideas?

13. What sort of leader would your team say you are?

14. How do you motivate your team?

15. Give me an example of a time that you have encouraged an employee.

16. What are the most difficult decisions to make?

17. What is the most difficult part of being a leader?

18. What is the best part of being a leader?

19. How would you define success?

20. What personal characteristics of yours do you believe contribute to your success as an entrepreneur?

21. What personal characteristics of yours do you believe get in the way of your success

    as an entrepreneur?

Appendix B: Group Consent Form

To Whom It May Concern:

My name is Nicolya Grigsby-Williams. Currently, I am a doctoral student at Concordia University Portland. For the dissertation, I desire to research women entrepreneurs. The purpose of this qualitative phenomenological study is to explore how women entrepreneurs define their own leadership style and the way in which they view their success. The research questions to be addressed are: how do women entrepreneurs describe their leadership experiences as entrepreneurs? How do women entrepreneurs describe their success as entrepreneurs? From the perspective of women entrepreneurs, what impact does leadership style have on their entrepreneurial success? I would like the opportunity, with your permission, to recruit women from your group for this study. I will post three times within one week to explain what my study is and to ask women if they would be willing to participate. If they agree I will privately direct message them for the remainder of the details. This study poses no risk to the participants.

Please sign below to let me know if you agree that I can use your Facebook group Impact Driven Entrepreneur Nicolya Grigsby-Williams to recruit potential participants for my study. If you have any questions, feel free to email me at [Researcher email redacted].

____ Yes, I agree you may use my Facebook group to recruit women to participate in
your research
____ No, I do not agree that you can use my group to recruit women to participate in your
research

Signature_____ Date_____

Appendix C: Interview Questions

1. Can you tell me about your business?

2. How long have you been in business?

3. How do you define your leadership?

4. Name of leadership style? If not a name description

5. What characteristics make you that type of leader?

6. How does it feel when people refer to you as a leader?

7. What is the difference between a leader and manager?

8. How have you gained commitment from your employees? Or clients?

9. Tell me about the experiences you have had from working with other people.

10. What is your greatest strength as an entrepreneur?

11. What is your greatest weakness as an entrepreneur?

12. How do you get others to accept your ideas?

13. What sort of leader would your team say you are?

14. How do you motivate your team?

15. Give me an example of a time that you have encouraged an employee.

16. What are the most difficult decisions to make?

17. What is the most difficult part of being a leader?

18. What is the best part of being a leader?

19. How would you define success?

20. What personal characteristics of yours do you believe contribute to your success as an entrepreneur?

21. What personal characteristics of yours do you believe get in the way of your success as an entrepreneur?

22. Is there anything else that you feel is important to add?

Appendix D: Focus Group Questions

1. What ways do you measure your business as a success?

2. How do you measure success for yourself as a leader?

3. What are your professional affiliations?

4. Have you participated in any leadership development experiences?

5. Do you believe education has helped in your role at all, if so how?

6. How can you tell if your business is positively growing?

7. How can you tell if your business has positively impacted your community?

8. What actions play a role in increasing your business success?

9. What is your attitude about your business?

10. Do you believe work -life balance is important? How do you attempt to achieve balance?

11. What additional information would you like to add that we have not discussed?

Appendix E: Memoing Template

Observational Protocol: _____

Date: _____

Time: _____

Activity: _____

Descriptive Notes	Reflective Notes

Appendix F: Statement of Original Work

The Concordia University Doctorate of Education Program is a collaborative community of scholar-practitioners, who seek to transform society by pursuing ethically-informed, rigorously-researched, inquiry-based projects that benefit professional, institutional, and local educational contexts. Each member of the community affirms throughout their program of study, adherence to the principles and standards outlined in the Concordia University Academic Integrity Policy. This policy states the following:

Statement of academic integrity.

As a member of the Concordia University community, I will neither engage in fraudulent or unauthorized behaviors in the presentation and completion of my work, nor will I provide unauthorized assistance to others.
Explanations:

What does "fraudulent" mean?

"Fraudulent" work is any material submitted for evaluation that is falsely or improperly presented as one's own. This includes, but is not limited to texts, graphics and other multi-media files appropriated from any source, including another individual, that are intentionally presented as all or part of a candidate's final work without full and complete documentation.
What is "unauthorized" assistance?

"Unauthorized assistance" refers to any support candidates solicit in the completion of their work, that has not been either explicitly specified as appropriate by the instructor, or any assistance that is understood in the class context as inappropriate. This can include, but is not limited to:

- Use of unauthorized notes or another's work during an online test
- Use of unauthorized notes or personal assistance in an online exam setting
- Inappropriate collaboration in preparation and/or completion of a project
- Unauthorized solicitation of professional resources for the completion of the work.

Statement of Original Work (continued)

I attest that:

1. I have read, understood, and complied with all aspects of the Concordia University- Portland Academic Integrity Policy during the development and writing of this dissertation.

2. Where information and/or materials from outside sources has been used in the production of this dissertation, all information and/or materials from outside sources has been properly referenced and all permissions required for use of the information and/or materials have been obtained, in accordance with research standards outlined in the *Publication Manual of The American Psychological Association*

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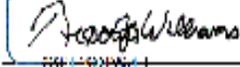
[signature]

_____
Digital Signature

Nicolya C. Grigsby- Williams
_____
Name (Typed)

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