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Motivations, Roles, Characteristics, and Power: Women Volunteer Leaders on Nonprofit Boards of Directors

Bridget Elizabeth Lyons
Virginia Commonwealth University

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MOTIVATIONS, ROLES, CHARACTERISTICS, AND POWER:
WOMEN VOLUNTEER LEADERS ON NONPROFIT BOARDS OF DIRECTORS

A dissertation submitted in partial fulfillment of the
requirements for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy at
Virginia Commonwealth University

by

Bridget Elizabeth Lyons
B.A., Saint Michael's College, 1983
M.Ed., Virginia Commonwealth University, 1991

Director: Michael S. Wise, Ed.D
Program Head, Department of Recreation, Parks and Sport Management
Division of Health, Physical Education and Recreation
Virginia Commonwealth University

Virginia Commonwealth University
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Acknowledgement

Someone once told me that completing a dissertation is like running a marathon, which was a good analogy for me. After having survived both however, a marathon seems much shorter, less painful, and a lot easier to finish.

Actually my dissertation experience has been an incredible one mostly because of my committee members. Dr. Michael Wise has been a mentor to me since I came to VCU and provided endless support and advice in this research project. Dr. John Rossi, Dr. Marcia Penn, and Dr. James McMillan were instrumental in guiding me through the process and offered their invaluable expertise. Thanks to Dr. Deborah Getty who was my advisor during my doctoral course work and always gave me sound advice when I needed it. Also a thank you to the women who volunteered to participate in the study and willingly shared their life experiences with me.

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ABSTRACT

MOTIVATIONS, ROLES, CHARACTERISTICS, AND POWER: WOMEN
VOLUNTEER LEADERS ON NONPROFIT BOARDS OF DIRECTORS

Bridget E. Lyons, Ph.D.

A dissertation submitted in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of
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The purpose of this study was to describe and analyze the leadership experiences

of woman presidents of nonprofit agencies who are perceived as successful. Recognizing

that participants' descriptions of their leadership experience are both similar and

different, those similarities and differences are explored and analyzed. Commitment to

the organization's mission, communicating a vision into action, fostering collaboration,

and an adaptable leadership approach all contributed to the success of these female board

presidents.

A case study design was used to obtain an in-depth understanding of the

phenomenon of women leaders on nonprofit boards of directors. In-depth interviewing,

observations with field notes, member checking, and written materials were utilized as

data collection techniques. The selection of eight current and former board presidents for this study involved purposeful, criterion-based sampling. The researcher selected subjects based on their knowledge and experience with the phenomenon under investigation.

An interesting finding from the study was that participants shared the same motivation and commitment to nonprofit work, as well as similar leadership qualities despite their differences in socioeconomic background, ethnicity, race, and age. The data also revealed these women place a high value on the social element of nonprofit work. Research supports that women overall are more likely to attach importance to helping others then men who place more significance on status and prestige. This finding based on the literature review and data analysis, suggests further research should include a comparative study of leadership qualities of men and women nonprofit board presidents to determine if there is a consistent leadership model.

Nonprofits need to recognize that future leaders are out there waiting to be trained and among them are women who have transferable skills along with a passion and commitment to an organization. Those nonprofit agencies who understand the value of training and board development will be cultivating the leaders of tomorrow.

CHAPTER I

OVERVIEW OF THE STUDY

Introduction

In his book *Making the Nonprofit Sector in the United States,* Hammack (1998)

chronicles the role women have played in the nonprofit sector throughout American

history. Women's involvement has helped develop social institutions, advanced political

and social reform and created new career opportunities for women.

Female volunteers and employees have always been the primary work force in the

American nonprofit sector. A recent survey by the Independent Sector (1999) reported a

higher percentage of women volunteers (56%) than men (44%). However, despite this

fact there is limited information on women's roles and representation as nonprofit

executives and board members (Pynes, 2000). The purpose of this study was to examine

the phenomenon of women leaders who have been successful on nonprofit boards of

directors.

What is a Nonprofit Organization?

Defining a nonprofit organization is a complicated task because of the diverse

group of organizations that comprise the approximately 1.6 million institutions in this

sector within the United States. The nonprofit sector is not unique to the United States,

but few countries have developed it to such an extent (Salamon, 1999).

Several broad characteristics distinguish most nonprofit organizations:

- Incorporated nongovernmental entities, granted tax-exempt status by the Internal Revenue Service.

- Private institutions separated from government. They can however, receive government support.

- Institutions that do not exist to generate excess revenue for owners. If excess revenue is made, it must be circulated back into the organization.

- Self-governing institutions with internal procedures in place to control their own activities.

- Institutions that use of volunteers and voluntary participation as a significant part of the functioning of the organization, usually through a volunteer board of directors and staff.

- Institutions categorized as member-serving organizations or public-serving organizations. Member-serving organizations primarily exist to provide a benefit to members rather than the general public, while public service organizations exist to serve the public at large (Salamon, 1999, pp. 10-11, 23).

Board of Directors

"By law, every nonprofit [organization in the United States] must have a governing board" (BoardSource, 2002b, p. 1). Individuals serving on boards are volunteers who are either elected or appointed. Nonprofit boards take on a variety of roles and functions. Boards are guardians of the organization's mission and are responsible for making sure that the mission is the guiding force in determining programs

and activities. The board also has financial, fiduciary, and fundraising responsibilities, which requires that the group be comprised of individuals diverse in skills.

While staff members usually perform day-to-day organizational procedures, ultimate responsibility for ensuring legal and ethical integrity, as well as maintaining accountability, rests with the board of directors. Ingram (2001) outlines several activities that fall into areas of responsibility for the board:

- Adhering to local, state, and federal laws and regulations that apply to nonprofit organizations;

- Filing and making available accurate, timely reports required by federal, state, and local government agencies, including IRS Form 990;

- Keeping detailed records of any lobbying expenditures and activities;

- Protecting the organization's staff, volunteers, and clients from harm or injury by ensuring compliance with occupational, safety, health, labor, and related regulations;

- Developing and maintaining adequate personnel policies and procedures;

- Registering with the appropriate state agency before beginning an organized fund-raising campaign;

- Adhering to the provisions of the organization's bylaws and articles of incorporation and amending them when necessary;

- Providing for an independent annual audit of all revenues, assets, expenditures, and liabilities;

- Publishing an annual report that details the organization's mission, programs, board members, and financial condition (p.15).

Rationale for the Study

When one reflects about the most influential individuals within this sector over the course of history, it is revealing to note that a person is as likely to think of women as playing important roles as of men. Individuals like Clara Barton, Jane Addams, Dorothea Dix, Lucretia Mott and Elizabeth Seton come to mind, just to name a few. Of the three sectors (government, private, nonprofit) nonprofit is the only one "that really taps the full spectrum of the nation's talent" (O'Connell & O'Connell, 1989, pp. 4-5). Yet, "despite women's historical and current prominence in the nonprofit sector, the composition of governing boards, where power is said to reside, still mirrors and supports pervasive class, ethnic-racial, and gender discrimination throughout the nonprofit system and society" (Odendahl, 1994, p. 297).

Throughout American history, volunteering was a pursuit that allowed a woman to do work outside the home and make an impact on society. Many middle and upper class women used volunteering as a subtle way to rebel against traditional roles and yet keep within socially acceptable behavior. MacLeod (2000) observed a leadership approach that exemplified this traditional behavior when interviewing older, upper class women involved in nonprofit work in Boston, Massachusetts during the 1980s. She referred to it as "quiet power." It is a style that encourages high levels of participation and consensus building.

For some upper class women volunteer work has continued to provide an arena
for the intricate mix of femininity and power. And quiet power is a way of
accomplishing what these women wish to accomplish, while remaining true to
their own ideals for proper female behavior (p. 75).

According to a 60-year time span study by Abzug (1999) of nonprofit boards in
six cities, women have made little progress in the area of nonprofit governance.
Biographical data on boards and individual trustees were collected from 15 large and
comparable nonprofit organizations from six metropolitan areas within the United States.

Although by 1991 men and women sat on some of the same prestigious nonprofit
boards of directors . . . women constituted, at most 35 [percent] of the elite boards
in the population (and a much smaller percentage when data from the all-female
boards are suppressed), and these percentages changed very little over 60 years (p.
33).

Shaiko (1997) identifies organizational attributes to explain why women lack
success in gaining leadership positions in nonprofit organizations. Wealthier and/or older
associations are more likely to be lead by men. "In associations and public interest
organizations, the male bias related to organizational longevity may be the result of the
later entrance of women into the national work force" (p. 127). Shaiko also offers
evidence to indicate that the smaller the percentage of female board members the greater
the likelihood the executive director is a male.

Carli (1999) defines different kinds of power and the implications for women:
"Expert power is based on, not actual competence, but perceived competence" (p. 3).

"Legitimate power is derived from a person's external status or position" (p. 5). When a woman has expert power she still may not be accepted as a leader, because of the lack of legitimate power.

> The absence of women as board members, or their assignment to the periphery of board governance, could hinder nonprofit organizations as they attempt to stay competitive. This issue is relevant for public administration as more and more government services are being contracted out to nonprofit organizations (Pynes, 2000, p. 35).

By the year 2008, approximately 49% of the labor force will be comprised of women (U.S. Department of Labor Women's Bureau, 2000). As more women enter the work force, they will be entering more fields and earning higher salaries. Research concludes that women in the labor force volunteer more than homemakers (Wilson & Musick, 2000). Women volunteers bring experience, knowledge, and contacts to the nonprofit sector. Historical misconceptions exist however, about men and women as volunteers.

> Unpaid work done on behalf of social welfare has most often been labeled 'volunteering,' while unpaid work on behalf of political change has instead been called 'activism.' …Since women were perceived as doing mainly social services while men did the politicking, volunteering became typed as 'women's work' (Ellis & Noyes, 1990, p. 10).

Purpose of the Study

The purpose of this study was to identify and describe the factors that might account for the success of women leaders on nonprofit boards of directors. Recognizing that participants' descriptions of their leadership experience are both similar and different, those similarities and differences are explored and analyzed. The goal was to understand and describe the experience of being a female board president.

The primary areas of focus were (a) characteristics and motivations, (b) leadership style, (c) role definition and power, and (d) advantages to being on a board.

Foreshadowed Problems

This study used a phenomenological approach and began with foreshadowed problems that were phrased as broad research questions. As part of an emergent design, foreshadowed problems are based on preliminary knowledge and are reformulated during the early stage of data collection (McMillan & Schumacher, 2001).

The broad research questions to be answered by this study were:

1. How do women leaders describe their path to leadership within the nonprofit setting? What meaning do they give to this experience?

2. What is it like to be a female leader of a nonprofit organization? What meaning do they give to their position?

3. What qualities do these women ascribe to their success as leaders in the nonprofit sector?

4. How does the process of social interaction with board members shape the meaning of the leadership experience?

Definition of Terms

The following terms are defined for clarity of the foreshadowed problems:

1.   *Nonprofit organization* – An organization that is neither government nor business, created to provide a public service, and does not exist to make profit for owners or investors.

2.   *Board of directors* - Group of individuals responsible by law for the stewardship of the organization. In this paper, the term "board" will be used to refer to this group.

3.   *Board responsibilities* – Guardians of the organization's mission, responsible for fiscal oversight, fiduciary oversight, and legal and ethic integrity.

4.   *Executive committee of the board* – Responsible for coordinating board activities, usually comprised of the board officers, may make board decisions in between board meetings.

5.   *Board chair* – Volunteer who coordinates and oversees the responsibilities of the board, executive director and subcommittees. Provides vision and leadership to the board and organization. Works in partnership with the executive director to achieve organization's mission and goals. Is the link between the executive director and the board.

6.   *Executive director* – Hired by the board of directors to implement and advocate the organization's mission, recruit and hire staff, and be responsible for the overall management of the organization. This person can also be referred to as the Chief Executive Office (CEO).

7.   *Leadership style* – The manner in which an individual communicates direction, motivates, and inspires others to produce change.

8.   *Vision* – Having an image of a possible and desirable future for an organization, then communicating that vision to others to enlist their support (Kouzes & Posner, 1987).

9.   *Mission* – A statement articulating why the organization exists.

Methodology

A case study design was used to obtain an in-depth understanding of the phenomenon of women leaders on nonprofit boards of directors. In-depth interviewing, observation, and written materials were utilized as data collection techniques. "Qualitative methods typically produce a wealth of detailed information about a much smaller number of people and cases. This increases understanding of the cases and situations studied but reduces generalizability" (Patton, 1990, p. 14).

In qualitative inquiry the researcher acts as the primary means of data collection. Data collection methods are an extension of human behavior like looking, listening, speaking, and reading (Lincoln and Guba, 1985). The credibility of the research depends on the interpersonal skills and rigor of the person doing the fieldwork. The use of multiple methods of data collection improves the accuracy of data analysis and enhances credibility.

Significance of the Study

Current nonprofit executives and the board need to make an effort to include more women as board members, volunteer fundraisers, and foundation trustees. Documenting

the motivations and interests of women philanthropists not only recognizes their contributions, but also creates role models and new standards for female involvement in the nonprofit sector (Shaw & Taylor, 1995). More and more women are taking control of their financial resources, assuming leadership positions in the for-profit sector, and continuing to volunteer more than men. It only makes sense that they should be involved in decision-making roles as board members and officers. As the nonprofit sector continues to grow and serve broader and more diverse constituencies, board composition should reflect this diversity. Improving recruitment and training of future board members regardless of gender, is a way to improve board effectiveness.

Although women have made significant contributions to the nonprofit sector, there is limited research on how they contribute in leadership positions. This study, organized into five chapters, provides data describing the experience of women serving as officers on nonprofit boards of directors.

<div align="center">Summary</div>

This chapter includes the issues that motivated this study, a brief introduction to nonprofit organizations, the rationale for the study, the purpose for the study, a description of foreshadowed problems, the methodology employed, and the significance to the field.

Chapter II is a review of background literature on women's evolving role in the nonprofit sector and in leadership positions. Leadership theories are identified and compared. Information presented guided the design of the study.

Chapter III identifies and explains the research methodology and the specific procedures used. Although this study is not meant to be generalizable, the research procedures employed may be of use in further research into understanding the leadership experience of women in the nonprofit sector.

Chapter IV presents the results of the data analysis and includes a vignette that captures a few of the salient themes. Following the vignette are the actual findings on which the major themes and categories are based. In Chapter V findings are linked with prior research, major assertions are stated, and implications for future research are discussed.

Summary of Findings and Conclusions

Findings from the study included that participants shared the same motivation and commitment to nonprofit work, as well as similar leadership qualities despite their differences in socioeconomic background, ethnicity, race, and age.

The leadership qualities described by the participants and observed by the researcher do fit into traditional definitions of female leadership traits. Current research is moving away from making a distinction between men and women's leadership style and moving towards identifying successful leadership practices and basic capabilities of leaders. Gender differences appear to play a limited role, once women are given the chance and access to power. Whether labeled feminine or successful, the leadership model that emerged from the data was one that seems to be consistent with and successful for the nonprofit environment.

Women serving on nonprofit boards of directors act within a framework of an organization, but it is their interpretation of the situation that defines the experience. The personal and professional benefits from board involvement described by the participants are a result of the social contact with others in this environment.

The nonprofit sector continues to grow as more programs and services are assumed by this sector. Therefore, the composition of nonprofit boards needs to evolve as constituencies are becoming broader and more diverse. The makeup and structure of boards are critical to organizational survival. There is also a need for strong leaders on nonprofit boards, as opposed to leadership by default.

The varied backgrounds of the participants in this study support the argument that leaders do not need to fit a certain mold or stereotype to guide an organization. Female values of collaboration, inspiring others, and recognizing accomplishments have emerged as important leadership qualities.

Nonprofit agencies need to recognize women who have transferable skills along with a passion and commitment to their organization as potential leaders. Through board training and development organizations will be safeguarding their future.

CHAPTER II

LITERATURE REVIEW

The American nonprofit sector has been a significant part of this nation's history. Prior to governmental structure early settlers joined together and formed voluntary organizations to deal with common concerns and needs within a community. Colonists assumed responsibility for public safety, building and maintaining roadways, sustaining a water supply, and medical care. Individuals sought roles in the formation of a new country. Most of the time however, these colonists' activities were based more on the need for survival than benevolent motives (Manser & Cass, 1976; Ellis & Noyes, 1990).

As cities began to form, voluntary associations supplemented government services. In his city of Philadelphia, Benjamin Franklin pioneered the volunteer fire company, as well as establishing a hospital, university, and free library. Even after the American Revolution and the passage of the Constitution, education, health care and public services remained primarily a volunteer venture until the twentieth century (Manser & Cass, 1976; Ellis & Noyes, 1990; Hammack, 1998).

Sieder (1960) in *The Citizen Volunteer* gives a historical perspective to voluntarism in the United States:

Voluntarism and the citizen volunteer are as indigenous to the American way of life as democracy. Since democracy in the United States is based on the Judaic-Christian ethic of the rights and responsibilities of the individual for the society of

which he is a part, this becomes a truism. Trace the history of any health or welfare institution in the United States and its origin will be found in the devoted efforts of dedicated citizens who are working without pay (p. 38).

In his book *Democracy in America,* written in 1835, Alexis de Tocqueville (1956) describes the unique feature of the American voluntary association:

The Americans make associations to give entertainments, to found seminaries, to build inns, to construct churches, to diffuse books, to send missionaries to the antipodes; they found in this manner hospitals, prisons, and schools. . . . Wherever, at the head of some new undertaking, you see a government in France, or a man of rank in England, in the United States you will be sure to find an association (p. 198).

The historical force of voluntary acts cannot be denied when you identify the volunteer element in such actions as the Revolutionary War, education, the abolitionist movement, health care, civil rights, cultural arts, and social reform. Prior to the twentieth century, volunteering was one way women as well as men could make an impact on history, and their contributions to this country's growth need to be recognized (Ellis & Noyes, 1990). The United States has a history of developing leaders through citizen participation.

<div align="center">History of Women in the Nonprofit Sector</div>

The American nonprofit sector has provided the opportunity for minority groups to create an alternative power structure and gain access to civic life. This has not been easy however, because men (primarily white Anglo-Saxon Protestants) have controlled

most charitable organizations throughout history and disfranchised groups lacked political and legal clout (Hammack, 1998; O'Neill, 1994).

While most of the American churches' charity was focused abroad in missionary work, women felt a need to address concerns here at home. Women's organizations started within the churches and took up the cause of ill-fated women and children, which was seen as a justifiable endeavor by both men and women. The Society for the Relief of Poor Widows with Small Children (SRPWC) was one of the first female relief organizations in the United States, started in 1797 by a group of New York women. This organization typified early female philanthropic efforts by aiding a narrowly defined constituency and combining personal commitment with fundraising and personal donations. It also underscored the importance of "securing means of self-support for other women." Female board members were able to achieve a public role through their involvement in charitable activities (Shaw & Taylor, 1995, p. 24-25; McCarthy, 1990 p. 2, 4).

Benevolent societies were the main type of women's association in the early 1800s. Their aim was to care for those unable to take care of themselves and in the process not just save the body, but the soul as well. During the 1820s and 1830s, benevolent societies continued to grow, but, in addition, organizations dedicated to social reform and antislavery were begun (Scott, 1990, pp. 37-38). Separatist organizations (segregated by gender) gave women an opportunity to work together for charitable aims, social reform and constitutional change during a time when women lacked the right to vote (McCarthy, 1994, p. 20). Separate sex organizations were a way for black and white

women to address social issues. "Voluntary associations became arenas in which women and men claimed and reshaped the definition of public and private, male and female" (Evans, 1997, p. 68).

The antebellum women's rights movement represented a new direction for women, "one that advanced explicitly electoral instead of moral means for effecting social change." Women's power of persuasion was slipping away as reform became based on electoral politics. Female influence and visibility in work such as the antislavery and temperance movements decreased significantly (Ginzberg, 1990, pp. 124-125). Women working for charitable causes like the American Female Guardian Society, Children's Aid Society and the Women's Prison Association were less affected by disenfranchisement. However, in an effort to maintain stability and growth within these organizations, a trend toward mixed and male advisory boards sacrificed women's autonomy and decision-making power. In addition, the hiring of male employees by the predominantly male boards reduced the work and status of female volunteers (Ginzberg, 1990, p. 126-128).

> The Civil War ushered in the next phase of voluntary association activity, as women brought to bear all that they had learned in benevolent and reform organizations over the preceding fifty years. While the guns were still booming in Charleston harbor, women all over the country began to organize what would become literally thousands of soldier's aid societies (Scott, 1990, p. 40).

These aid societies gave many women in the North and South exclusive administrative responsibility, proving they had the ability to organize and coordinate

activities. The Civil War left many women concerned about their economic security because of wartime casualties. Women also witnessed the necessity for improved health care and emerging social needs. "Although women began to move beyond religious charities in the decades after the Civil War, they continued to concentrate their giving in traditional areas of feminine concern: health, education, and social work" (McCarthy, 1990, pp. 17-18).

In the decades after the Civil War, male-controlled foundations and institutions created by wealthy individuals like John D. Rockefeller and Andrew Carnegie were modeled after the modern corporation and set the norm for art, education and policy-making. While women made significant monetary donations to these institutions, male trustees set policies and procedures that had an adverse effect on the growth of women's professional status (McCarthy, 1994, pp. 23-24). The postwar world was characterized by corporatism and scientific charity that took a cynical approach to human nature and reform. Charity Organization Societies comprised of the elite upper-middle class demanded a new professionalism, challenging the idea that women were best suited for benevolent work (Ginzberg, 1990, p. 200).

In the later part of the nineteenth century women were given leadership opportunities in the growing number of religious organizations. This experience "trained women for public life, educated some of them about social problems, and taught a few how to shape public policy." A new movement of secular women's clubs or associations lead to the formation of organizations like the National Woman Suffrage Association, the

New England Woman's Club and the Woman's Trade Union League (Scott, 1990, pp. 42-43).

"Historical information on African-American women in voluntary associations is limited and almost nonexistent for black women serving on boards (Odendahl & Youmans, 1994). According to Scott (1990) African-American women should not be overlooked for the important part they played in promoting civil and workers' rights by joining together in community and national organizations in the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries."

At the start of the twentieth century a "genre of female philanthropy" began as women started to inherit fortunes and create institutions of their own. One area these women devoted their attention to was the arts. Individuals like Isabella Stewart Gardner and Gertrude Vanderbilt Whitney who founded their own museums are examples of female philanthropists with the ability to "promote change on a new scale through their sizable donations" (McCarthy, 1994, pp. 24-25).

The issue of philanthropy is important for several reasons. Before women won the right to vote in 1920, philanthropic endeavors – giving, voluntarism, and social reform – provided the primary means through which the majority of middle- and upper-class women fashioned their public roles. From the suffrage movement to the creation of social settlements, these women used their philanthropic ventures to wield political power, to create new institutions, and to effect social change (McCarthy, 1991, p. xii).

With the passage of the Nineteenth Amendment, granting women the right to vote, a "symbolic alliance" existed between voluntarism and political gains. During the Progressive era, involvement in social reform initiatives gave women the qualifications to enter governmental careers, specifically those focusing on the needs of women and children (McCarthy, 1990, p. 15).

Women played key roles in the "religiously based human service and health care nonprofits of the nineteenth century, but men dominated the new enterprise of science and professionalism from the 1920s through the 1970s" (Hammack, 1998, p. 285).

In the early twentieth century, women's donations were less significant and more directed then men's. Women were far less likely to create the foundations that had been fashioned by men like Carnegie and Rockefeller, "funded in perpetuity, rooted in professional expertise and designed to centralize individual giving." The endowment of scientific research moved beyond the scope of women philanthropists to the professionals, millionaires and big foundations run by men (McCarthy, 1990, pp. 19-20).

During the Depression, men entering traditionally female fields like teaching, social work, and librarianship negated some of the professional advances women had made. In addition, women holding jobs were accused of taking them away from men, when they should be at home taking care of their family. However, women remained active volunteers during the 1930s in religious and civic organizations, and especially in the labor drives happening throughout the decade (Evans, 1997).

When the United States entered World War II in 1941, "women responded in massive numbers to the social needs of wartime society." Several million volunteered for

the Red Cross, ran USO canteens, worked for the Civil Defense, and rationed food and materials. Women were also enticed into factory work by government propaganda campaigns that "emphasized women's civic and patriotic duty to work in the defense industry in no way undermined their traditional femininity" (Evans, 1997, pp. 220-222).

The impact of World War II on women cannot be measured in the immediate postwar era. Other wars such as the Civil War and World War I had broadened the boundaries of acceptable behavior for men and women and had hastened changes already in process such as suffrage, but their impact on women's status – their culturally defined roles – remained similarly ambiguous and ephemeral (Evans, 1997, p. 239).

The woman of the 1950s was expected to put motherhood and homemaking first. Community volunteering was seen as an extension of domestic responsibilities. Women were often the organizers of churches, parks, libraries, and schools, but were seldom placed in leadership positions when these endeavors became institutionalized (Evans, 1997).

The passage of the Civil Rights Act of 1964 and the Equal Pay Act of 1963 along with the women's movement during the 1960s improved women's economic and social status. In addition, women became more educated and vocal about their rights. The social concerns of this decade "called for new nonprofit organizations to facilitate the changes being sought." Some of these new organizations focused exclusively on women's issues (Preston, 1994, p. 41).

During the 1970s the feminist movement took a negative view of service volunteering, seeing it as another form of exploitation instead of a means to learn job skills, explore careers, and make job contacts. By the end of the decade this position had changed, as the federal government initiated programs to stimulate a volunteer workforce to resolve community issues, giving women the opportunity to become policy makers (Ellis & Noyes, 1990; Evans, 1997).

The status of women has improved significantly in the last 50 years, with more representation in the workforce and social and political change creating power and advancing equality. Is this also true within the nonprofit sector? According to O'Neill (1989):

> One of the most important policy issues facing the third sector and American Society is the role of women, particularly the role of women in professional and leadership positions. . . . The women's liberation movements of both the nineteenth and the twentieth centuries originated within the sector, and women have played major leadership roles in nonprofit health care, education, social service, and advocacy movements. Yet, the position of women within the sector is still highly ambiguous (p. 41).

Women's voluntary efforts have been critical to this country's growth and development. Since the late eighteenth century, women's organizations have attempted to address social concerns such as urban poverty, temperance, and child health, and when necessary persuaded the government to get involved and take responsibility. "Moreover, the issues first addressed by women – education, health, housing, sanitation, unequal

wages, the environment – are now seen as major issues of urban politics" (Scott, 1990, p. 47).

Women have gained power through participation, political activism, the ability to work outside the home, and challenging traditional gender roles. Up until the 1970s however, jobs in the private and nonprofit sector perpetuated gender stereotypes by the kind of work considered appropriate for men and women. Men were perceived as leaders and decision makers, holding positions of power, while women were supposed to be the employees and volunteers, lacking a voice (Ellis & Noyes, 1990).

"Despite the impressive progress of women in leadership positions in the last two decades, women still are underrepresented in elite circles." This nation's large private and public institutions continue to be predominately male. "Overall, only about 10 [percent] of top institutional leaders – presidents, directors, and trustees…are women" (Dye, 2002, pp. 157, 154).

In order to understand why progress has been slow in the area of leadership opportunities for women it is necessary to consider the structure of nonprofit boards as well as characteristics and motivations for serving on a board. In addition, an examination of women's relationship to power, status, and leadership, will give insight into the barriers women face.

<div align="center">Board of Directors of Nonprofit Organizations</div>

People coming together with a passion and commitment to a mission are the real starting point of a nonprofit organization. The board of directors however, is the official beginning point of a nonprofit agency. This group is responsible for preparing the articles

of incorporation (basic operating framework) and the bylaws (internal operating procedures) of the organization. The articles of incorporation are submitted to the state office that administers corporate status (e.g. state corporation commission or the secretary of state office). "If a charitable organization plans to seek recognition of tax-exempt status under Internal Revenue Code Section 501(c)(3), its articles must include additional information regarding its qualifying tax-exempt purpose" (Duca, 1996, p. 20). Nonprofits that choose to file for tax exemption with the federal government must (churches and religious organizations are an exception) produce an IRS Letter of Determination, which names the category for exemption (Duca, 1996, pp. 20-21). The organizational bylaws outline the operational guidelines and should be written carefully as well as reviewed regularly because of the legal ramifications of the document.

Volunteer board service is a "traditional form of citizen participation" and with it comes the "public service duty to the entire community" (Duca, 1996, p. 3). Board members define, develop, and guard the organization's mission and hire an executive director to implement the mission. Additional board responsibilities include the following:

- Financial – Fiscal oversight by managing resources effectively.

- Legal – Ensure that the organization is functioning within the framework of the mission, exercising loyalty and care when acting on its behalf. Make certain that taxes are paid and tax forms are filed.

- Fiduciary Oversight – Management of the organization by strategic planning, policymaking, approval of the budget, and the hiring (or removing) and evaluation of the executive director (BoardSource, 2002c).

- Fundraising – Secure adequate resources for the activities of the organization through various means that might include special events, planned giving, and personal donations.

- Advocate – Develop communication links to the community to promote the work of the organization (Wolf, 1999, p.48).

Officers

"Nearly every nonprofit organization has officers" (Hopkins, 1993, p. 22). Normally they include a president or chair, vice-chair, treasurer, and secretary. The bylaws typically state the selection, duties, and term of the board members. The work of the board is sometimes done through standing or ad hoc committees. The executive committee is usually comprised of the organizations officers and is responsible for setting board agendas, coordinating other committees and activities, and handling issues that require immediate attention (Wolf, 1999).

Board Composition

All new board members should believe in the cause and mission of the organization and be willing to learn from differing points of view. The board should be diverse in skills and interests given its varied roles and responsibilities and have the ability to understand issues from different viewpoints.

Diversity should include "differences across a range of demographic attributes" beyond age, gender, and race, considering other characteristics like religion, education, physical ability, and socioeconomic background. These differences should be based on the organization's mission. The composition of boards is changing in part because organizations receiving federal funds have accountability to the government and constituencies are becoming broader and more diverse (Duca, 1996, pp. 39-40). This changing membership will result in new interests, values, and goals being brought into organizations. The composition and structure of boards are critical to organizational survival. The typical homogeneous group of individuals who amiably agree on decisions is being replaced. Creating effective representation involves a governing structure in which members of varied backgrounds can contribute toward a common goal around the mission (Bernstein, 1997; Miller, 1999).

Boards should be diverse and differences among members should be respected and encouraged. Effective organizations invite opposing views and anticipate differences. Board votes are rarely unanimous, but once a decision has been made the "one-voice" principle should be followed. The power and strength of the board is that of a group, not individuals, bringing diverse points of view to consensus. In addition to consensus, debate and discussion results in a more involved and bonded board and organization (Bernstein, 1997; Carver & Carver, 1996).

Characteristics and Motivations of Board Members

The reasons why individuals become board members are varied. They can range from having the opportunity for power, prestige, and networking, to altruism and belief in

an organization, to feelings of pressure or guilt. Results of the most recent National

Center for Nonprofit Boards (NCNB) nonprofit governance survey (2000) indicated that

most people joined a particular board because of the organization's mission, followed by

being asked to join by a friend or colleague. Respondents identified leadership and

organizational planning as the most important skills they had to offer. When asked if their

background and skills were being utilized effectively on the board, 78% responded "yes"

(p. 33).

A study by Abzug (1999) looked at the differences in women's experience with

board membership over a 60-year period from 1931 to 1991. The data comes from a

study of 15 nonprofit organizations in six U.S. metropolitan areas (Atlanta, Boston,

Cleveland, Los Angeles, Minneapolis/St. Paul, and Philadelphia). In each of the cities the

boards of the following were studied: the largest secular and religiously affiliated

hospitals; the biggest fine art museum, symphony, university, and community foundation;

the United Way, the Junior League, the YMCA, the YWCA; and the largest secular and

religious human service organizations. Data were also collected from public record

sources, annual reports, media searches and interviews. One area of focus for Abzug's

research was comparing the types of men and women who were involved in nonprofit

governance. Results of the study indicated:

- Male trustees were significantly more likely to be married than female trustees
  across all time periods.

- No statistical significance existed in the *Social Register* listing.

- Male trustees were significantly more likely to hold professional degrees than their female counterparts.

- Across time periods, the percentage of male trustees who were White statistically exceeded that of female trustees. All of that difference is accounted for however, by the 1991 period, when only 86% of trustees were White, but female trustees were significantly more likely to be people of color.

- Female board members were considerably more likely to be Democrats than male trustees in the 1991 period.

- A major gender difference existed between male and female trustees' participation in the labor market. Worthy of note is that the proportion of female trustees not in the work force declined from 80% in 1931 to 28% in 1991. The corresponding number of male board members went from 2% in 1931 to 7% in 1991, perhaps indicating a small increase in male volunteers (pp. 29 - 31).

The results of this research are not surprising. In addition, the percentage of women on these boards has changed little over time. "Women constituted at most, 35 [percent] of the elite boards in this population (and a much smaller percentage when data from the all-female boards are suppressed)" (Abzug, 1999, p. 33). When the Junior League and YWCA board memberships were not factored in, the male dominated boards were approximately 15% female in the 1931 and 1961 time periods but "statistically significantly higher at 28 [percent] by 1991" (Abzug, 1999, p. 29).

While a board of directors as a group has responsibilities, which have been previously outlined, there are also personal characteristics that board members should

possess. BoardSource (2002a) considers the following as important individual qualities: the ability to listen, analyze, and think clearly; sensitivity to differing opinions, with a responsive and patient approach; willingness to attend and be prepared for all board meetings; readiness to contribute financial and personal resources; motivation to develop or improve fundraising, recruitment, and fiduciary skills; and the ability to work well with people individually and in groups.

Women and Leadership

Since the 1960s there has been a large increase in the number of women entering the work force in the United States. The changing role of women in society over the past four decades has created more opportunities for women to emerge as leaders, but the reality is most women are still not given the same opportunity to develop to their full potential (Davidson & Cooper, 1992; Haslett, Geis, & Carter, 1991). In the past, leadership roles for women were primarily in female organizations like sororities, women's clubs, and female institutions of education, so for some men and women the notion of a woman as a leader is still foreign (Moran, 1992). The perception of gender differences in leadership styles has also been an impediment to women seeking advancement.

Do men and women differ in their approach to leadership? Research findings tend to be ambiguous. In addition, women were not included in leadership studies until the 1970s. Hence, management and leadership models have traditionally been based on theories of male behavior. When authors started to include women as subjects in their research, female leadership stereotypes were prevalent. Bass (1990) identifies some of

those sex-role stereotypes assertions: (1) women are not as competent but warmer emotionally than men, (2) female leaders are more attentive to upward communication; males are more effective in a downward direction, (3) women who lead in a participative manner are viewed as passive and when a directive style is used, women are seen as too aggressive and masculine, and (4) women lack the characteristics to become effective leaders. However, he states that available evidence, particularly from field studies, indicates no clear evidence of differences in supervisory styles.

Most writers have made a distinction between men and women's leadership styles based on what is valued. Men tend to appreciate individuality and a rewards system in the workplace, while women value cooperation and relationship building (Frederick & Atkinson, 1997, p. 119).

A study by Irby and Brown (1995) investigated male and female perceptions of effective leadership. In-depth interviews were conducted with 120 executives – 60 men and 60 women. Respondents perceived that male leaders tended to rely on their own past experience, judgments, confidence, and skills at analyzing and solving problems, while women obtained input and were perceived as being more emotional and as bringing more personal problems to the job which would affect their handling of situations.

Participants perceived men to have legitimate power or authority based on their gender, while women apparently earn authority through the passage of time and hard work. Overall, all respondents viewed the following as successful leadership characteristics: seeking input, encouraging others to be involved in decision-making, sharing power and credit, empowering others to improve skills, and maintaining open

communication. These are generally perceived as feminine traits. What is interesting is that when contrasting the effectiveness of male and female leaders, careful analyses of both male and female responses reveal subtle and negative connotations toward the above listed characteristics (Irby & Brown, 1995).

The terms "transactional" and "transformational" leadership were first conceptualized in the work of Burns (1978) and further developed by Bass (1985). In a study by Rosener (1990) her findings on leadership performance described men as transactional and women as transformational. Men regard leadership performance as a "series of transactions with subordinates" and derive power from organizational position. Women tend to get subordinates to convert self-interests into group goals and power is credited to personal characteristics rather than organizational rank (p. 120). Earlier research by Bass (1985), found that while both transactional and transformational leadership approaches were "positively associated with satisfaction and effectiveness, transformational leaders factors, particularly charisma and individual consideration, were more highly related than transactional leadership factors to satisfaction and effectiveness" (p. 219).

While doing research for her book, *The Female Advantage: Women's Ways of Leadership,* Sally Helgesen (1998) found that "even the most successful women executives viewed themselves as having complex identities that encompassed the various roles that they assumed in both public and private life." She compared her research to that of Henry Mintzberg, who studied successful male executives. Mintzberg surmised "men's sense of who they were derived almost entirely from the high position they held." He

saw this as a major weakness that made these men vulnerable during times of uncertainty and transition. Helgesen concluded that the more holistic approach to work and life exhibited by the women she studied is better adapted to a world in which change is constant (p. 56).

Astin and Leland (1991) and Helgesen (1990) assert that although women have the burden of handling additional roles in their lives, this has contributed to making them better leaders and capable of balancing conflicting demands. "A career is not a methodical rise to power" for most women, "but a zigzag course of ups, downs, and plateaus" (Aburdene & Naisbitt, 1992, p. 99). Successful women leaders can be both competent in the workplace and maintain a healthy personal life.

In a study of educational leaders, Thompson (2000) found no statistical differences between men and women in leadership characteristics, contradicting stereotypical assertions. The purpose of his research was to examine differences in gender between a "balanced" or "unbalanced" leadership style. The evidence of the study indicates that women who use several leadership frames are perceived to be as effective as men. Thompson concludes that women "demonstrate the qualities necessary to lead and manage organizations equally as well as men" (p. 11). A multiframe approach is the best way to achieve effective leadership. This style is critical for nonprofit organizations as the dynamics of this sector evolve in the twenty-first century. Eagly and Johnson's (1990) meta-analytic review concluded that in organizational studies male and female leaders did not differ in leadership styles, while in laboratory experiments and assessment

studies aspects of gender leadership styles existed. In all three studies women adopted a more democratic or participative approach, less autocratic and direct than men.

Management expert Peter Drucker does not believe in the titles "leadership traits" or "leadership characteristics." He contends that a nonprofit leader must have three basic capabilities: first "a willingness, ability, and self-discipline to listen;" second, "a willingness to communicate and be understood;" and last, "a willingness to realize how unimportant you are compared to the task" (Drucker, 1990, pp. 18, 20).

Women are developing their own style of leadership and have had success with an interactive approach. There is a demand for a new set of skills that includes negotiation, bargaining, and decision making to create a more humanized work environment. With a rapidly changing work force and workplace, it only makes sense that a new management style should emerge (Moran, 1992; Haslett et al., 1991). The idea that leadership can be observed and learned is a consistent theme in the work of Kouzes and Posner (1987) and Bennis and Nanus (1985). They dispel the myths about leadership and believe people have the potential and capacity to lead. Leadership can be taught and enhanced, and leadership is about empowering others not overpowering others. Definitions and theories of leadership have changed over time; perhaps leadership should be a reflection of the current environment and be flexible enough to fit the situation.

<div align="center">Role Definition and Power</div>

Historically, voluntary organizations tend to mirror a patriarchal family model. Men as fathers are the policymakers. Traditionally upper-class white men have occupied the boards of the most prestigious and bigger budget organizations. Women function

within specific roles and are likely not to be recognized. Women are seen as maternal and take on the responsibilities of maintenance and nurturing work primarily in the area of social welfare. While acknowledging the fact that through nonprofit work women have created a situation to acquire power, this sector may also have limited them to doing the jobs and functions a women performs within the family. For this reason, gender stereotypes about women and their appropriate role have been reinforced by nonprofit ideology and work (Odendahl, 1994, pp. 298-299).

Fredrick and Atkinson (1997) caution us about replacing one gender stereotype with another when comparing feminine and masculine leadership styles and believing the assumption that there is only one paradigm to follow. There is no one "uniform ideal for leading." Being an effective leader often depends on the situation (p. 127). They suggest the key is to be flexible in your approach, evaluating and responding to each situation in the best way possible.

> Making all these distinctions between the ways men and women lead tends to support a sex segregation in the workplace that has typically worked against women. According to Robin Ely, an assistant professor of public policy at the Kennedy School of Government in Cambridge, Massachusetts, 'It reinforces a set of expectations about what women [and men] can and cannot do. . . . Differences in the way people lead is often driven more by the work environment than by their gender.' (Leach, 1993, p. 9).

The biggest issue for women who aspire to be leaders is being given the status and authority by others. Power on the job usually determines a leadership approach.

Women are not always given the same power as men with similar qualifications because of stereotypic expectations that women are not as competent and therefore do not deserve the same status as men. Women are more likely to have personal or reverent power based on relationship building, as opposed to situational or legitimate power derived from status or position. Hence, in an organizational setting, women's motivation for power is oriented toward group goals, whereas men's motivation for power is more focused on personal advancement (Haslett et al, 1991; Carli, 1999). Based on this assessment women leaders would seem to operate more effectively in a position of power in the nonprofit sector, where a board of directors must work as a cohesive group on behalf of the organization. In her book, *Men and Women of the Corporation,* Rosabeth Moss Kanter (1993) argues:

The effectiveness of women leaders, then, like that of men, is a response to opportunities of power, to a favorable position in the power structure. Both men and women can exercise their authority more productively and with better response when they have the power behind it. This, too, is a standard organizational cycle: power breeds effectiveness at getting results, which enhances power. But psychological 'sex differences' seem to play a limited role, if any, once women are given a chance and access to power (p. 343).

Gender differences in power result in men and women using different strategies to influence others. When women are perceived to be less competent and/or lack status, their ability to influence others is diminished. The dilemma women face is when they

have the ability and competence to lead; their influence may be underscored by the lack

of legitimacy (Carli, 1999).

MacLeod (2000) explores the complexities of being female and having power in

her study of older women leaders of elite nonprofits in Boston during the 1980s. "Quiet

power" emerged as a result of these women who were in their 50s and 60s and is defined

as the "powerlessness in relation to the men in their lives, and their relative powerfulness

in relation to their voluntary positions" (p. 290). Although they lacked professional

status, these women were influential in the areas of board responsibilities: fundraising,

policy making, and recruiting new board members. She makes a comparison of the

leadership style of women in corporate roles and the women in her study referring to

common themes like collaboration, networking, and connectiveness. *Merriam-Webster's*

Collegiate Dictionary (2002) defines power as "the ability to act or produce an effect."

These women did not perceive themselves as having power, but their influence in getting

things done would certainly meet the definition.

<div align="center">Social Integration and Occupational Advantage</div>

The reasons behind volunteering have changed and expanded beyond just the duty

to help others. Impetus to volunteer may include the exploration and interest in an

activity or work, wanting to be an agent for change, individuals with similar issues

helping each other, or gaining a new perspective on a social or personal cause

(Independent Sector, 1999).

In addition to the reasons above, women may engage in volunteer work for the

contacts it creates or maintains with congenial others. For example, the Junior League has

traditionally been a way to meet others and participate in a community, especially for a woman who has moved to a new area. Contacts made through volunteering have the potential to become social connections and sometimes even close friendships. It is not uncommon to recruit new volunteers who are from the same social sphere as women can see their social position and social responsibilities intertwined (MacLeod, 2000). Historically it has also provided an opportunity to meet a potential spouse.

With so many women now in the workforce, this should have a negative effect on the number of female volunteers. However surprisingly, this is not the case. Wilson and Musick (2000) analyzed data from the National Longitudinal Surveys of Labor Market Experience (NLS), which provides information on volunteering over an extended period of time to examine women's labor force participation on volunteer work. In their study of women's labor force participation and volunteer work, they conclude that women in the labor force volunteer more often than homemakers because it expands their range of social ties. Volunteerism offers women greater social integration and occupational advantages. The low cost of volunteering also provides families with a way to spend time together participating in a worthy cause.

Volunteer work and paid employment are becoming intertwined because of the recent phenomenon of people who move in and out of the workforce on a regular basis. According to Helgesen (1998, p. 102) this is representative of "different phases in a long continuum of work." Experiences in both spheres provide an individual with the opportunity to develop skills, career interests, establish contacts, making them a more well-rounded person.

This has particular significance for women, for women have long been energetic volunteers, especially those who take the time off from work to care for young children. During the first years of the women's movement, this tradition of volunteering was disparaged, and women's willingness to work hard without pay portrayed as a form of exploitation. However, in an era when a single job rarely suffices for a lifetime, the value of skills, and networks formed while volunteering become more clear. Increasingly, the volunteer sector is where people express – and often discover – their real passion, which may then have a profound effect on how they earn their living (Helgesen, 1998, pp. 102-103).

In a 1995 Independent Sector Survey of Giving and Volunteering about one fourth of the participants said one of the reason they volunteer was to make new contacts that might help them in business. Although it is believed that volunteering can be an advantage to helping individuals find employment, Wilson and Musick (2000) say there is little evidence to support this idea.

Pynes (2000) points out the professional advantages for women:

An attractive recruitment appeal for women may be the types of management skills they could develop by serving as a board member. Management issues are germane to all organizations, public, private or nonprofit. Being a board member provides you with insight as to how other agencies function. All organizations need employees with communication and management skills, and leadership potential (p. 45).

Vogel (2000) also mentions the benefit of nonprofit board experience to professional life. It is a way to hone leadership skills, network with other business professionals, gain experience with committee structure, and enhance decision-making ability. Corporations also understand the benefit they gain when employees establish a

good relationship within a community and look favorably at nonprofit board membership when recruiting directors for their own board.

Professional Status and Influence

Grochau's (1989) research examines the relationship between an individual's professional status and the ability to be influential on a nonprofit board of directors. Data were collected by interviewing board members, administering a questionnaire about their influence and the influence of other board members, and, lastly, the observation of board meetings. Analysis of the data indicated that professionals were seen as more influential. Characteristics associated with being a professional are similar to those attributes used to describe a nonprofit organization: service for the common good, altruism, autonomy, success measured by service not financial gain, and responsibility and trust (Majone, 1980; Grochau, 1989).

Despite the similarities, one major difference is that policy and decision-making are done through a collaborative group effort. Board members have individual as well as group responsibilities. Grochau (1989) poses the question, "How is this done when some people are perceived as being more knowledgeable and influential than others" (p. 78)?

From the literature, it is clear that earning professional status for a woman means overcoming barriers. Although as MacLeod (2000) points out a woman can have status without being a professional. With status comes power and the ability to be influential. Despite the negative perceptions and treatment, women are making progress. Part of the solution is increasing the number of female role models who are recognized as leaders. Is serving on a board of directors the route to being accepted and treated as an authority? Or

does a woman need status and power prior to serving on a board to be an effective

leader?

<div align="center">The Essence of Leadership</div>

Leaders have a significant impact on any organization. We want leaders to be

competent, have a sense of direction, and the ability to get the job done. "In essence

leadership appears to be the art of getting others to want to do something you are

convinced needs to be done" (Packard, 1962, p. 170). Unlike the for profit sector, the

nonprofit sector does not have the same rewards or pressures to influence others to act,

but sometimes they can be just as powerful. Leadership on a volunteer board of directors

requires building commitment, shared values, and the perception of being a part of a

larger whole. "When individual, group, and organizational values are in synch,

tremendous energy is generated. Shared values are the internal compass that enable

people to act independently and interdependently" (Kouzes & Posner, 1993, pp. 121-

122).

Based on the results of a series of interviews of successful CEOs and exceptional

leaders from the public sector, Bennis and Nanus (1985) surmise these leaders pull as

opposed to push, inspire rather than order, set achievable but challenging expectations,

reward progress rather than threaten and manipulate, and enable others to take initiative

instead of limit their actions (p. 225).

In their book, *The Leadership Challenge,* Kouzes and Posner (1987) outline five

similar leadership practices common to successful leaders:

1.   Challenge the process – searching for opportunities and taking risks.

2.   Inspire a shared vision – envisioning the future and enlisting others.

3.   Enable others to act – fostering collaboration and strengthening others.

4.   Model the way – setting the example, planning small wins.

5.   Encourage the heart – recognizing individual contributions, celebrating

accomplishments (pp. 7-8).

These practices are particularly important for a nonprofit volunteer leader whose

methods of persuasion and influence within a connected group of individuals are different

than those used in the private sector.

Research on gender differences in human development describe women's sense of

self rooted in relationships and connections (Belenky, Clinchy, Goldberger, & Tarule,

1986; Gilligan, 1982; Miller, 1986). Miller (1986, p. 86) refers to this as "affiliative ways

of living" – women valuing affiliation and interconnections as much or more than

authority and self-enhancement. Perhaps this is because the development of gender

identity for males involves separation and individualization, while for females it is

defined through attachment. Instead of viewing this as a negative trait, women need to

recognize that cooperation and connection are valuable qualities that can create the ability

to influence others and implement change. As mentioned earlier, the meaning of

leadership has changed over time, maybe now is the time to integrate the importance of

making and maintaining relationships into the definition.

According to Bennis and Nanus (1985) leadership creates the vision for an

organization and then leaders must have the skill to transform vision into reality. A

dynamic person conveys a vision that builds commitment and unity. "Vision animates, inspirits, transforms purpose into action" (p. 30).

Vision plays a key role in producing practical change. For a vision to become a reality however, it must be communicated through the use of a voice and the process of interaction. "All organizations depend on the existence of shared meanings and interpretations or reality, which facilitate coordinated action" (Bennis & Nanus, 1985, p. 39). The manner in which a leader communicates can vary greatly and will effect how the message is received and interpreted.

> The woman's voice is a means both of presenting herself and what she knows about the world, and for eliciting a response. Her vision of her company might define its ends, but her voice is the means for getting that vision across. And it is in this method, in this concern for means along with ends, that the value for connectedness is nurtured (Helgesen, 1990 pp. 223-224).

There are several approaches to translating a vision to action in a nonprofit setting to achieve the desired outcome. One way is to "engage others in advancing the vision" (Nanus & Dobbs, 1999, p. 94). Sharing information and ideas to encourage support and commitment to the vision is one method. Organizations need to see the advantages and effectiveness of interactive leadership. This style was not accepted initially because it was viewed as feminine. Leadership that is open and inclusive fits the rapidly changing work environment and increases cooperation toward goal achievement (Rosener, 1990). When women are only allowed to be listeners, their voices are stifled and they are denied the opportunity to disseminate a vision.

Women as Board Members

According to the 2000 Catalyst Census of Women Corporate Officers and Top

Earners, women comprise 12.5% of corporate officer ranks of Fortune 500 companies.

Over the past six years this percentage has continued to grow. The public sector trend is

toward more diversity where women and minorities are no longer token members

("Taking Corporate Boards," 2001).

How does this compare to the nonprofit sector? A recent survey by the NCNB

(2000) reported women comprise 43% of volunteer board membership. However, service

is usually on boards of "smaller arts and cultural, health, human services, educational,

and international organizations, and professional societies, and trade associations. The

boards of the larger management support [i.e. Executive Service Corps, CompassPoint]

and environmental organizations have the fewest number of women" (p. 12). While

looking at demographic information, it is important to remember that different kinds of

nonprofit boards will be accessible and attract diverse types of women. For example,

Junior League board members may be more elite than other prominent boards; YWCA

board members are usually more racially diverse and liberal compared to other

organizations (Abzug & Beaudin, 1994).

The NCNB survey also reported that 59% of respondents felt that their boards

were not representative in age, sex, race, and ethnicity in the communities their

organizations served. In order to correct this, the majority of those responding indicated

their boards needed to diversify in general. Approximately one-third specified that

African Americans, Hispanics, women, young people, or constituents needed to be added to board membership (NCNB, 2000, p. 12).

Odendahl (1994) states that while ideas that lead to equity are more likely to come from the nonprofit area rather than private or government, if women are to gain power they must succeed in all three sectors.

Nonprofit ideology and work reinforces gender stereotypes about women's proper roles. . . . To a large extent, both the 'femaleness' and the potentially oppressive nature of many nonprofit enterprises may be explained by the lack of capital and the heavy use of voluntary labor. . . . Furthermore, when compared to other economic sectors, nonprofit endeavors are generally thought to be derived from subsidiary to government or money making activities. There is widely held, but unexamined, assumption that in the American context, real power and status can only be gained from for-profit endeavors. Nonprofit activities are auxiliary to 'real life,' (Odendahl, 1994, p. 299).

The review of literature on nonprofit boards indicates a need for greater diversity within board membership because of the growth in this sector and the broadening of constituents served. In the area of leadership, research focuses on the importance of individual qualities like listening, analyzing and motivating, as opposed to a specific leadership style. Changes in the workforce as well as the nonprofit environment require a leadership approach that is flexible and can handle the complexities of human behavior. Women continue to make inroads within the for-profit and nonprofit sectors, but the glass ceiling still exists. Looking at the experiences of women leaders within the nonprofit area

is a way to explore the major topics mentioned earlier with a focus on whether nonprofit work has been a source of empowerment for women.

This chapter has presented an overview of the nonprofit sector, the role of women within the sector, and boards of directors. In addition, it included a review of the research and literature on the major topics that include characteristics and motivations, role definition and power, and social and occupational advantages for women serving on nonprofit boards. The following chapter presents the methodology used in the study.

CHAPTER III

METHODOLOGY

Introduction

This chapter explains the theoretical perspective for the study, selection of

participants, the researcher's role, general strategies used in data collection and analysis,

and the delimitations of the research.

Research Design

The purpose of this study was to describe and analyze the factors that might

account for the success of women leaders in the nonprofit sector. A phenomenological

approach with a case study design was used to understand the meaning board members

give to this experience.

Put simply and directly, phenomenological inquiry focuses on the question:

"What is the structure and essence of experience of this phenomenon for these

people?" The phenomenon being experienced may be an emotion – loneliness,

jealously, anger. The phenomenon may be a relationship, a marriage, or a job. The

phenomenon may be a program, an organization, or a culture (Patton, 1990, p.

69).

Phenomenological research describes the meaning of lived experience. The aim is

to "transform lived experience into a textual expression of essence – in such a way that

the effect of the text is at once a reflexive re-living and a reflective appropriation of something meaningful" (van Manen, 1990, p. 36).

The case study design used the following qualitative data collection techniques: audio taped interviews, observations with field notes, participant review, and relevant organizational documents.

<div align="center">Theoretical Perspective</div>

An emergent case study design was used because of the exploratory and interactive nature of the research. According to McMillan and Schumacher (2001), a case study design is used to obtain an in-depth understanding of one phenomenon.

Qualitative research methods analyze data inductively with topics, categories, and patterns emerging from the data. This is considered a "bottom up" approach rather than a "top down" when a hypothesis is predetermined. Theory is grounded in the data and takes shape as the researcher attempts to bring structure and interpretation to a mass of collected data (Bogdan & Bilken, 1998). Using a phenomenological mode of inquiry is appropriate when the purpose of the study is to understand the social phenomenon from the participants' perspective. Attention is given to the process and experience with the assumption that multiple realities can exist.

Phenomenological analysis can be divided into several phases. The first part requires the researcher to become aware of personal bias and assumptions about the investigation, putting aside any judgment or viewpoint to see the experience for what it is. Patton (1990) refers to this as a "phenomenological attitude shift" that reinforces rigor. Following this shift the researcher attempts to dissect and analyze the data. Phrases and

statements are identified and then interpreted by the researcher as well as the participants. All aspects of the data are treated equally before they are reduced into major, minor and leftover categories. The researcher then identifies constant themes to carry out an "imaginative variation" on each theme – examining the same concept from different viewpoints. Using an enhanced version of the theme, the researcher moves to a textural portrayal, which is an "abstraction of the experience that provides content and illustration but not yet essence." The last phase is the development of a "structural synthesis." The true meanings of the experience for the individual are described and the essence of the phenomenon is revealed (pp. 407, 409).

Symbolic interactionism is a theoretical perspective associated with the phenomenological perspective. "The methodological rule is that social reality and society should be understood from the perspective of the actors who interpret their world through and in social interaction" (van Manen, 1990, p. 186). George Herbert Mead and Herbert Blumer are two individuals whose work is associated with this social psychological approach. Blumer (1969) identified three basic premises of symbolic interactionism:

1. People act toward things based on the meaning these things have for them.

2. The meaning of a thing is derived from social interaction. People develop common definitions and shared meanings.

3. Meanings are handled in, and modified through, an interpretive process used by the person dealing with the things he encounters (p. 2).

Another significant facet of symbolic interactionism is the social construct of self. Developing a definition of self is done through a process of interactions with others

(Bogdan & Biklen, 1998). Women serving on nonprofit board of directors act within a framework of an organization, but it is their interpretation of the situation that defines the experience. This theoretical perspective was appropriate for this study because the study's purpose was to understand and describe the meaning women leaders derive from the social interaction of board membership.

A phenomenological approach is different from other approaches because of the assumption that "there is an essence or essences to shared experience. These essences are the core meanings mutually understood through a phenomenon commonly experienced. The experiences of different people are bracketed, analyzed, and compared to identify the essences of the phenomenon . . ." (Patton, 1990, p. 70).

Researcher's Role

Lincoln and Guba (1985) discuss the "human as instrument" in qualitative research. Data collection methods are an extension of human actions like looking, listening, speaking and reading. Therefore, interviewing, observing verbal and nonverbal cues, and reviewing documents come naturally when the instrument is a human being (p. 199).

One of the researcher's roles was that of an interviewer with the intent of being immersed in the situation and the phenomena being studied. Using open-ended questions that ask, "what and how?" allowed the researcher to get the interviewee's perspective.

> We interview people to find out from them those things we cannot directly
> observe. . . . We cannot observe feelings, thoughts, and intentions. . . . The
> purpose of interviewing, then is to allow us to enter into the other person's

perspective. . . . The task of the interviewer is to make it possible for the person being interviewed to bring the interviewer into his or her world. The quality of the information obtained during the interview is largely dependent on the interviewer (Patton, 1990, pp. 278-279).

"Some characteristics in some settings make establishing rapport easier. Being closer in age to your subjects or being the same gender may facilitate rapport" (Bogdan & Biklen, 1998, p. 88). Interview skills should include knowing when to ask certain questions and when to pause and probe. Understanding the participants' language is part of the social relationship between researcher and interviewee.

The researcher used naturalistic observation as another method of data collection. The direct observer is not a participant and attempts to be unobtrusive and detached to avoid biasing the observations (Trochim, 2002). "Simple observers follow the flow of events. Behavior and interaction continue as they would without the presence of a researcher, uninterrupted by intrusion" (Adler & Adler, 1998, p. 81).

<center>Participants</center>

Selection of participants for this study involved purposeful, criterion-based sampling. The researcher selected subjects based on their knowledge and experience with the phenomenon under investigation. The sampling strategy was based on "informational, not statistical considerations." "Its purpose is to maximize information, not facilitate generalizations" (Lincoln & Guba, 1985, p. 202).

To identify potential board officers to interview and refine the criteria for both the individual and the organization, meetings were arranged with knowledgeable experts in

the community. This group included an Executive Vice President of the United Way within the metropolitan area, an Executive Director of the local YWCA, a nonprofit consultant and trainer, and a former corporate sector leader who had also served as a board officer of several nonprofit organizations in the area. Based on the recommendations of these individuals, the researcher obtained a list of best examples or information-rich key informants.

For the purpose of this study the following organizational and individual criteria were considered for inclusion in the sample:

1. Local organizations not directly connected with a national parent group or national organizations that are trade groups and have autonomy.

2. An organization well established in the community, heterogeneous and in existence for more than 10 years. The researcher would then be able to review written materials and get a sense of the organizational structure and culture.

3. An organization recognized as providing an important service identified by community leaders.

4. The organization needed to have an annual budget of at least one million dollars. More women tend to serve on boards with budgets less than this amount.

5. Organization with board size of no fewer than 13 members. According to the NCNB (2000) the median board size is 17 and the average board size is 19.

6. Individuals selected were current or former board presidents. The assumption was that these individuals had experience as board members and also had held other officer positions.

7.   Individuals selected were based on their positional or community influence. The

purpose was to get a representation of women from different backgrounds within

the community.

8.   Individuals selected included representation by age, race, and ethnicity to add

richness to the data. Comparisons among these criteria will be discussed in the

results.

The researcher identified a sample size of approximately 12 perspective

participants, eight individuals agreed to be interviewed and observed for the study. By

using an emergent design the researcher had the opportunity to add to the sample as

fieldwork progresses if this sample size was not adequate.

Profiles of Participants

The following section includes a short profile of each of the board

presidents/chairs that participated in this study. The names of individuals have been

changed and specific organizations have not been identified for confidentiality purposes.

Anne

Anne is a tall, attractive 52-year-old caucasian woman, with a wonderful smile.

She is married and has an adult son and daughter. Her demeanor is warm and friendly.

Both interviews took place in her home, which was a reflection of her character. She

grew up in the city in which she now resides and holds a Master's degree in Education.

Anne has worked as a teacher and also ran a business from her home. She has been

committed to a human services nonprofit for about 12 years. The agency is over 50 years

old and is affiliated with a national organization. Anne has also served as president of

other nonprofits. The agency's budget is approximately 10 million dollars and the mission area is career training services for people with barriers to employment. The board consists of 29 members, seven of whom are women. She recently completed her two-year term as president.

Sara

Sara is a petite woman of color in her early forties. Her manner is professional, confident, but also pleasant. Sara is a successful partner in a large law firm. The interviews were held in a conference room at her office. She is single and was raised and went to college in the state where she now lives. Sara earned her law degree from a prestigious institution. She serves on several nonprofit boards. She has recently completed a one-year term as president of an arts and culture organization. The board included 23 men and 11 women while she was president. Sara has been involved with this nonprofit for several years. The organization has a budget of approximately one million dollars and has been in existence for over 35 years.

Page

Page is a successful caucasian businesswoman in her early forties who oversees a family company. The interviews were conducted in her office. She has a straightforward approach, direct and candid. Page is married with two children. She is from the area where she lives and works. Page also has a law degree and was employed as an attorney before moving back to her hometown. She just completed her first year of a two-year term as president. The organization is a sectarian nonprofit whose mission area is to develop and implement programs for the community it serves. The agency has an annual

budget of about eight million dollars. It was founded over 55 years ago and earned 501(c)(3) status 44 years ago. The board of directors includes 32 individuals about one third are women.

Lisa

Lisa is a knowledgeable, self-assured and affable caucasian woman in her early sixties. She is married and the mother of three grown children. She moved many times during her childhood but has called this part of the country home for over 20 years. She has an MBA from a local university and works as a consultant. Her conversation is reflective and down-to-earth. The first interview was held at a coffee shop and the second interview at her home. Her nonprofit experience as a volunteer board member is extensive. Lisa just rotated off as president of a human services organization with which she has been affiliated for about 10 years. The agency services the economically disadvantaged and has a budget of approximately one and a half million dollars. The board of directors is comprised of 23 members. The organization has a long history serving the community as it was founded in the 1920s.

Maureen

Maureen is a small framed, spry 72-year-old woman of color who does not look her age. She is married and has one adult son. Maureen has a Master's degree in Social Work and a background in that field as well as in education. She is a captivating storyteller who has a wonderful outlook on life regardless of the situation. The researcher conducted the interviews at the condominium where Maureen lives with her husband. She has experience as a volunteer and professional in the nonprofit area. Maureen has

been president of several boards and has been involved with numerous organizations at the local, national and international level. She is still an active volunteer and board member of several organizations.

Mary

Mary is an attractive 44-year-old caucasian woman with a sense of style and an open and honest approach. She holds a Master of Arts degree and worked in an art related profession before getting married and having her three children. She also ran her own business, before focusing exclusively on nonprofit endeavors. Mary grew up in the community where she currently lives and has been involved with several nonprofit organizations in the area. She has recently completed her one-year term as chair of a nonprofit whose mission area is to enrich the lives of children. The board of directors is large with 41 members. Women held 20 seats on the board during her term. The agency was started in the early 1980s. Mary has a long history with the organization, which has a budget of 2.3 million dollars. The researcher met the participant for coffee at a local restaurant for both interviews.

Tora

Tora is a fit, stylish, 70-year-old woman of color. She has a welcoming smile and a thoughtful approach. Tora is married with two adult children. She is well-educated, having earned two graduate degrees and a doctoral degree. Her professional career has been in social work and education. She has a rich history of involvement on nonprofit and for-profit boards, serving as president and chair of several organizations. She has received numerous awards and honors for her community efforts. Tora is still active on

several boards and works part-time in a professional role. Both interviews were held at her office.

Stewart

Stewart is a high-energy caucasian woman of slender build in her early 50s. She is married and has lived in this area for about 10 years. Stewart's manner is straightforward and she is very comfortable in her role as president. She has prior professional experience working for two well-known national nonprofits. Stewart is in her fourth year as president of a human services nonprofit whose mission is neighborhood revitalization**.** The organization was founded in the late 1980s. The researcher interviewed Stewart at the nonprofit office. The organization's budget is approximately one and a half million dollars. Twenty-one individuals are on the organization's board and eight members are women.

Table 1, on the following page includes demographic and organizational information of the participants in this study.

Table 1.

Profile of participants by demographic and organizational information

Participant	Age	Race	Education	Currently Working	Current or former board president	Board size	Type of organization
Anne	52	Caucasian	MEd	No	Current	29	Human service
Sara	Early 40s	Minority	JD	Yes	Former – recently rotated off as president	34	Art and culture
Page	Early 40s	Caucasian	JD	Yes	Current	36	Education, heath, and recreation
Lisa	Early 60s	Caucasian	MBA	Yes	Former – recently rotated off as president	23	Human services
Mary	44	Minority	MA	No	Former – recently rotated off as president	41	Arts and culture
Maureen	72	Minority	MSW	No	Former	NA	Various
Tora	70	Minority	PhD	Yes	Former	NA	Various
Stewart	Early 50s	Caucasian	BA	No	Current	21	Human services

Entry into the Field

Once perspective participants were identified a cover letter (Appendix A) describing the study and asking for their assistance was mailed in either November 2002 or January 2003. This letter included the purpose of the study and the researcher's promise of anonymity to both the organization and the individual members during all stages of the research project. In all cases, the names of the board members and organizations were changed. Individuals had the choice not to participate and could also withdraw from the study at any time. Interviews were audio taped and lasted approximately one hour. The letter also included a request to observe two board meetings. Approximately a week after the letter was sent, the researcher followed up with a phone call to the participant or their assistant, asking if they would be willing to take part in the study. During the conversation, any questions were answered and the information included in the letter was reviewed. An interview date was then scheduled and the location was set at a place and time convenient for the participant.

Before beginning each interview the researcher reviewed the purpose of the study, the nature and scope of the questions, her commitment to anonymity in all printed documents, and the individual's right to pass on any questions that she felt were too intrusive. Informed written consent was obtained (Appendix B).

The researcher selected three current board presidents out of the participant pool to observe during board of directors meetings. Observations of board meeting took place between January 2003 and May 2003. Prior to attending the organizational board meetings, the executive director was given information explaining the research project,

the general purpose of study, and requesting board support to collect data by observation and tape recorder. Board members were asked to give their consent to the researcher's attendance and audio taping of meetings (Appendix C).

Data Collection Strategies

Qualitative data collection techniques include: participant observation; field observation; in-depth interviews; and documents and artifacts (McMillan & Schumacher, 2001). The primary method used in this study was in-depth interviews, supplemented by direct observation and document analysis.

In-depth interviewing – A semi-structured comprehensive interview with each participant was used with a follow-up interview to target specific themes, clarify statements or expand on ideas. In-depth interviewing was audio taped. Interview notes were also taken, to record observer comments. Pseudonyms were used during the interview as well as in the transcription.

According to Patton (1990) this method "involves outlining a set of issues that are to be explored with each respondent before interviewing begins" (p. 280). This approach allows the interviewer to adapt the sequence of topics and questions to the context of the conversation and avoids limiting the relevancy of the response. The participant can describe her thoughts and feelings in a conversational manner without the researcher dictating the discussion.

The first interview was conducted using a general interview guide approach (Appendix D). For the purpose of this study, it was essential to learn about the participants' characteristics and motivations, leadership style, and power on the board.

The rationale behind the first interview questions was based on the purpose of the study. Questions targeted the areas of personal background, interest in nonprofit work, nonprofit leadership path, leadership traits, role as board president, and personal and social benefits to experience. Participants received a summary of the first interview to review prior to the second meeting. Each second interview began with an opportunity to comment on the researcher's synthesis of the first interview. Follow up questions were based on previous remarks, leadership capabilities, and board meeting observations. Participants also received an interview summary after the second interview. Member checking added to the richness of the interpretation and provided an opportunity to enhance design validity.

The interview format was one method to gain insight and understanding of the experience, allowing the participant to explain it in her own words. Journal comments were recorded after each interview.

Naturalistic observation – Information was gathered by watching the social situation of two board meetings and the interaction of the president or chair. This method allowed the researcher to actively witness the phenomena she was studying in action. With this method, the qualitative observer sees concepts and categories unfold and can also bring together impressions of the surroundings (Adler & Adler, 1998). It also is a "powerful source of validation" and therefore should be part of the "methodological spectrum" used by researchers (Adler & Adler, 1994, p. 389). Note-taking, audio taping, and summary notes were employed when possible at the meetings to validate data from individual interviews. At each meeting the physical, procedural and human environment were noted, as well as observer's thoughts and reactions following an observational

protocol (Appendix E). Pseudonyms could not be used during the meetings, but were used when writing field notes, journal entries and when the data were transcribed.

Written materials - Supplemental information was obtained from examining organizational documents, including board and committee minutes, web sites, and annual reports. This information provided insight into the organizational structure and culture. In addition, each participant was asked to provide a copy of her resume to provide further insight into the background on the individual.

A field log was used to keep a record of each interview day, time, location, participant, and other relevant setting information. During and after board observations field notes were recorded. These notes were meant to be descriptive not judgmental. The researcher's thoughts and feelings were audio taped after each interview and observation, prior to being transcribed in a journal. The journal was also used to reflect on each interview and observation to speculate about emerging themes, to make connections between pieces of data, and to comment on additional ideas or questions to consider.

Data Analysis Strategies

Data analysis is the process of bringing order, structure, and interpretation to a mass of collected data (Marshall & Rossman, 1999). Analysis is a cyclical process incorporated into all stages of the research. Initial analysis occurred throughout the early stages of data collection through observer comments, field notes, and journal entries. Transcript preparation and revisions from taped interviews generated some preliminary analysis as well. When the researcher left the field and formally ended data collection, formal data analysis began.

The researcher conducted all interviews and observations and was responsible for analyzing the data. The researcher had never met or had personal communication with any of the participants before the study. Therefore, the researcher was an outsider. The researcher had some professional and educational experiences however, enabling her to empathize with the participants.

Analysis of the data was done in stages. Once an interview was transcribed, the researcher read through it for correctness and used the audio tape to verify accuracy. After each interview a thank you letter was sent to the participant with a summary of the interview with information organized by the areas of focus identified in the interview protocol. The participant reviewed this information for accuracy and completeness.

As the interviews were transcribed, the documents were then converted into text files and entered into HyperRESEARCH, a qualitative data analysis software package. Units of information from each interview were then marked using a coding scheme. Codes were then reviewed and edited as new transcripts were added and further data analysis took place. According to Lincoln and Guba (1985) data units should reveal information significant to the study and be able to stand by themselves without additional explanation.

Categories should be internally homogeneous and externally heterogeneous. The number of categories should be manageable but large enough to be comprehensive and illuminating (Merriam, 1988, p. 135). Categories and themes were compared and modified through the use of HyperRESEARCH reports. A peer reviewer was used to

review the researcher's codes and themes along with participant quotes the goal was to move toward the development of major assertions.

Holsti (1969) recommends using a content analysis approach – looking at the content of the data in category construction and development. He offers five guidelines:

1. The categories should reflect the purpose of the research and be congruent with research goals and questions.

2. The categories should be exhaustive by including all significant topics within a category.

3. No single unit of data should be placed in more than one category.

4. The categories should be independent of each other.

5. All categories should derive from a single classification principle.

As the researcher discovered categories and patterns in the data, she challenged this information by searching for other, plausible explanations for these data and the linkage among them. Alternative explanations must be explored and disproved to make sure a pattern exists.

"Analysis is shaped both by the researcher's perspectives and theoretical positions and by the dialogue about the subject that one cannot help but enter" (Bogdan & Biklen, 1998, p. 177). Some researchers are guided by particular theories that are in place before data are collected, others wait to see what emerges during data collection (Bogdan & Biklen, 1998, p. 180).

The researcher's goal was not to prove or disprove a hypothesis, but to demonstrate the plausibility of an assertion. "The aim is to persuade the audience that an

adequate evidentiary warrant exists for the assertions made, that patterns of generalization within the data set are indeed as the researcher claims they are" (Erickson, 1990, p. 159).

Analysis involves developing topics, categories, and themes that interpret the meaning of the data. When categories are reduced and refined and then linked together the analysis is moving toward the development of a theory to explain the data's meaning. In the final stage of interpreting the data, analysis goes beyond the formation of categories. The researcher looks for a theory to explain a large number of phenomena to explain how they are related (Merriman, 1988).

<div align="center">Validity</div>

Quantitative research includes both internal and external validity, while qualitative research employs different methods to develop knowledge (McMillan & Schumacher, 2001, p. 407). Qualitative design validity is based on the degree to which interpretation and meaning is shared between the researcher and participants. Accurate data collection and analysis enhances validity.   The essential strategies to be used in this study are in-depth interviews, direct observation, and document collection to provide different insights about the topic. This multi-method approach, called triangulation, combines different data collection techniques to clarify meaning and verify interpretation and observation (Stake, 2000). Triangulation allows the researcher to check information through cross validation of sources. Comments made by board presidents during the interviews were compared to what was observed during a board meeting and what was made available in written materials.

Open-ended interview questions were first tested using a pilot study with a respondent similar to those used in the sample. The researcher also sent an interview summary to the pilot study participant and followed up with her to get feedback and comments. This experience helped the researcher identify questions and topics that needed to be changed or clarified. It also provided a time estimate and pattern for ordering of questions.

Verbatim accounts were captured by audio taping the interviews. The information was transcribed, and then transcripts were summarized, highlighting main points and ideas. Copies of those transcripts were given to participants for member checking twice during data collection to provide each person the opportunity to respond to the researcher's analysis. Summaries were primarily phrased in the participants' language. The participant reviewed and modified information or interpretation before and after the second interview.

Subjectivity and Reflexivity - The interactive nature of the methodology required the researcher to have good interpersonal skills and be able to develop a trusting, empathetic, and nonjudgmental relationship with the interviewee. Interpersonal subjectivity keeps the researcher in check. It involves self-reflection during the process and reminds the researcher that fairness and caring for the participants is an ethical requirement (McMillan & Schumacher, 2001).

Reflexivity is related to subjectivity but has a broader meaning. It is "rigorous self-scrutiny by the researcher throughout the entire research process" (McMillan & Schumacher, 2001, p. 411). A field log was kept and consisted of dates, times, persons,

and location of interviews. Field notes included a thick description of the physical appearance, gestures, and nonverbal communication of the participants, since this cannot be captured on audiotape. The physical setting and account of how events unfolded was also noted. The reflective aspect recorded in a journal included the interviewer's thoughts, feelings, problems, and other ideas to take into consideration. "Tacit knowledge becomes the base on which the human instrument builds many insights and hypotheses that will eventually develop" (Lincoln & Guba, 1985, p. 198). Using a peer reviewer to review analysis of data and interpretation will also enhance reflexivity. The researcher's background in journalistic skills and counseling techniques were beneficial during this phase of the research.

Bias - One of the disadvantages of using an interview and observation is the potential for bias. It is impossible to conduct qualitative research without acknowledging and understanding your own values, perspectives and assumptions. Findings cannot exist independently of the researcher that is why a reflective journal is kept to document feelings and reactions. When a researcher has an "ax to grind," tries to impose a theory on data, or has a bias that prevents the researcher from seeing things that do not fit with her own view, then no new knowledge has been generated (Taylor & Bogdan, 1998).

The career work experience, educational background, and personal interests of this researcher in the area of gender equity advocacy were recognized and taken into account. The researcher attempted to acknowledge her own beliefs and values. There was a concern of over identifying with some of the participants, because of the barriers they had encountered. The researcher was also sensitive to her bias against women who have

gained their position because of money and status. Techniques used to control for bias included member checking, peer debriefing, triangulation (cross-checking of data) and reflective journal entries.

Comparability and Translatability – While experimental researchers concentrate on the generalizability of their results, qualitative researchers focus on comparability and translatability. Establishing comparability requires the use of standard and nonidiosyncratic terminology and analytic frames, as well as a clear description of groups studied or constructs generated to allow for a basis of comparison with other groups (LeCompte & Preissle, 1993, p. 47). McMillan and Schumacher (2001, p. 415) discuss the adequate explanation of the design components (researcher role, informant selection, social context, data collection strategies, data analysis strategies, authentic narrative typicality, analytical premises, alternative explanations, criteria associated with research purpose) to allow for extension of findings to other studies. Translatability assumes the researcher's theoretical framework is identified so clearly that it can be understood by others. Comparability and translatability are the basis for comparison between studies.

Reporting of Findings

"The culminating activities of qualitative inquiry are analysis, interpretation, and presentation of findings. The challenge is to make sense of massive amounts of data, reduce the volume of information, identify significant patterns, and construct a framework for communicating the essence of what the data reveal" (Patton, 1990, pp. 371-372). Central to the phenomenological approach is the significance of the "voice" of the participants and how they express their experience. The use of a narrative vignette

was the foundation for reporting fieldwork research. The vignette captured major themes and drew from the voices of the participants. The analytic narrative captures the reader's attention and sets the groundwork for Chapter IV. The remainder of Chapter IV reports the actual findings on which those themes and other categories are based organized by the four research question.

<div align="center">Delimitations of the Study</div>

There are always trade-offs when it comes to framing the research or evaluation questions that are necessitated by access to resources, limited time, and the extent of the depth of the research questions (Patton, 1990). Lincoln and Guba (1985) refer to these as boundaries. What is included and excluded is not based on subjective choices, but is determined by the focus of the study. The boundaries for this study included the following:

- Participant selection was limited to nonprofit organizations located within a particular medium-sized, southeastern city in the United States.

- The research was limited to current and former board presidents.

- The researcher was unable to attend a board meeting for all of the participants, since some individuals were no longer serving as the board president.

- Use of case study design and purposeful sampling limited the generalizability to other women serving on boards of directors; however it may have provided insight into direction for future research.

This chapter has reviewed the design and methodology that were used in conducting this study. Chapter IV provides a summary of the data analysis process, a

vignette based on the major themes, followed by a discussion of the actual findings

organized by the four broad research questions.

CHAPTER IV

FINDINGS

Description of Data Analysis Process

The researcher spent six months in the field during the data collection phase. Two in-depth interviews with each of the eight board presidents was the primary method used in this study (See Table 2). Another data source was direct observation at board meetings. This information was used to compare what the current board presidents said during the interviews with what was observed during the board meetings. Other data gathered included meeting notes, meeting agendas, and organizational publications. Each participant was also asked for a copy of their resume, since it was anticipated that some participants might omit important information during the interviews.

A professional transcriber or the researcher transcribed the audio tapes for each interview into computer documents. Participants were mailed and/or emailed a summary of each interview to review for accuracy and content as soon after the interview as possible. Each summary was about two pages in length and was organized by primary areas of focus. The document mainly included direct quotes with some paraphrasing of responses. The researcher received feedback from the participants either by phone or in person. The summary and journal reflections served as a preliminary analysis of the data. The summation from the first interview was also used to generate questions and points of clarification for the second round of interviews.

The next phase of inductive analysis and data management began with converting all the interview transcripts into electronic text files and entering them into a qualitative code and retrieval data analysis program. Transcripts were read and re-read before individual units of information were identified and a coding system was developed. The researcher identified 835 units from the documents (See Table 3). The coding process was done in stages. As the researcher developed subcategories, new understandings emerged which necessitated grouping units of data into larger subcategories or breaking them down into smaller subcategories.

Forty-six subcategories were identified and then sorted into general categories (See Table 4) grouped together by the primary areas of focus: (a) characteristics and motivations, (b) leadership style, (c) role definition and power, and (d) advantages to being on a board. The general interview guide provided predetermined categories of data, subcategories were both emic and etic in nature. The researcher reviewed the categorization process for redundant or repeated subcategories. This was done by selecting similar subcategories and generating a HyperRESEARCH report with case name, code name and source material.

Table 2.

Interview and transcript length identified by participant and interview number

Participant	Interview number	Time	Number of pages
Anne	1	1:20	17
Anne	1-A	1:15	26
Sara	2	1:00	13
Sara	2-A	:45	15
Page	3	:45	13
Page	3-A	1:00	19
Lisa	4	1:15	15
Lisa	4-A	:40	11
Maureen	5	1:10	22
Maureen	5-A	:50	19
Mary	6	1:15	18
Mary	6-A	:57	15
Tora	7	:55	13
Tora	7-A	:45	6
Stewart	8	1:10	21
Stewart	8-A	:55	19

Table 3.

Data units identified from each interview by participant and interview number

Participant	Interview number	Units
Anne	1, 1-A	94
Sara	2, 2-A	85
Page	3, 3-A	114
Lisa	4, 4-A	103
Mary	5, 5-A	106
Maureen	6, 6-A	110
Tora	7, 7-A	81
Stewart	8, 8-A	142
Total Data Units		835
Average Data Units Per Interview		104

Table 4.

Categories and Subcategories for Data Analyses

Category I

Characteristics and Motivations: includes family, educational, and employment
background, factors related to nonprofit involvement, interest in organization.

11 SUBCATEGORIES
   a. Demographic
   b. Education
   c. Employment
   d. Family
   e. Making a difference
   f. Motivation for nonprofit work
   g. Parent's influence
   h. Passion
   i. Religious influence
   j. Single-sex education
   k. Teaching experience

Category II

Leadership Style: includes leadership path, individual leadership style, leadership
qualities of a good board president, vision.

8 SUBCATEGORIES
   a. Boards served on
   b. Capabilities of nonprofit leader
   c. Leadership path
   d. Leadership training
   e. Mentors
   f. Own qualities and style
   g. Preparation for becoming president
   h. Qualities of a good president

Table 4 (continued)

Category III

Role Definition and Power: includes perception of role, power, fit, relationship with Executive Director.

14 SUBCATEGORIES
   a. Board composition
   b. Board development
   c. Board operations
   d. Boundaries
   e. Creating change
   f. Diversity on board
   g. Executive Committee meetings
   h. Power to get things done
   i. Relationship with Executive Director
   j. Role of president
   k. Sustainability
   l. Triangle relationship
   m. Vision
   n. Whatever it takes

Category IV

Advantages to being on a Board: includes affect on life, professional/social status, opportunities for women, reflection on experience.

13 SUBCATEGORIES
   a. Advice to new president
   b. Burnout
   c. Disadvantages of being president
   d. Loss of friendships
   e. Maintaining friendships
   f. Minority experience
   g. Outsider
   h. Personal growth
   i. Reflections on experience
   j. Rewarding part of experience
   k. Social and professional status
   l. Undervalues self
   m. Women and Leadership

Developing Themes

Patterns and themes were developed by linking categories together. Once the researcher had completed the coding process, she formed some preliminary themes. A document with themes and supporting quotes was given to a peer reviewer to confirm the researcher's interpretation. Emerging themes were those occurring consistently in meaning across the data. Discrepant evidence or exceptions to themes was also searched for and is reported in this chapter. This strategy was used to enhance the validity of the research.

Naturalistic Observation

Triangulation with other sources (board meeting observations and document analysis) was a method used to validate recurring patterns. Of the eight individuals who agreed to participate in the study, six were currently serving as board president, but three finished their terms before the interview process started. The remaining board presidents Anne, Page, and Stewart agreed to be observed during two board meetings. Prior approval was also granted by each organization's executive director through discussion with the board president and/or the researcher. At the start of each of the board meetings the researcher was identified and board members were asked to give their consent to the researcher's attendance and audio-taping of the meeting by signing a consent form. The researcher was given permission to audio tape meetings for two of the three organizations.

Field notes were taken at each meeting and were guided by an observational protocol that was organized into three areas. Watching the physical environment

validated comments about providing an atmosphere conducive to free flowing interaction and face to face discussion. The close physical proximity of the board president and executive director supported participant's remarks stressing the importance of this relationship. Observing the procedural environment allowed the researcher to witness the board president's leadership approach in action. The leaders were cognizant of staying on schedule, following agenda's, initiating discussion, but also allowed for flexibility when necessary. Although none of the meetings had any significant decision making taking place, the human environment observations focused on the interaction between the president and the board. The importance of making connections with board members and the enjoyment the participant derived from the social experience were apparent during each of the meetings. Journal entries were recorded as soon as possible after each of the board meetings to reflect on the experience and note ideas or questions for future consideration.

Organizational Documents

Organizational records supplemented the data gathered by interviews and observations. Nonprofit websites included a comprehensive description of the organization, its mission, history, and board information. It was essential for the researcher to have background knowledge of the organizations to appreciate and understand the commitment to the mission and passion expressed by the participants. Reviewing meeting agendas enabled the researcher to comment on the procedural environment during the meetings. Prior meeting minutes confirmed that the researcher was observing a typical board meeting. Meeting minutes were also a source to

corroborate leadership style and board interaction. Organizational newsletters or publications included acknowledgement of board members contributions and accomplishments. This recognition was also done by the board presidents during several board meetings.

Developing Assertions

Major assertions were developed from the themes drawing claims and conclusions with particular reference to the research questions. The goal was to move beyond the categories and themes into substantive ideas that cut across the data. The researcher's aim was to provide plausible explanations for the linkage among data. These assertions are stated in Chapter V.

<div align="center">Data Analysis</div>

The data analysis section begins with a vignette that captures a few of the salient themes in a narrative approach. The vignette is a result of the data analysis process and was constructed using examples of the major concepts within interview transcripts, observations, and field notes. The four fictitious people in the vignette and their responses are a compilation of the eight participants and one pilot study participant. Following the vignette, the researcher will discuss the findings on which the major themes are based.

As stated in Chapter I, the purpose of this study is to identify and describe the factors that might account for the success of women leaders on nonprofit boards of directors.

The researcher began the study with the following set of broad research questions:

1. How do women leaders describe their path to leadership within the nonprofit

   setting? What meaning do they give to this experience?

2. What is it like to be a female leader of a nonprofit organization? What

   meaning do they give to their position?

3. What qualities do these women ascribe to their success as leaders in the

   nonprofit sector?

4. How does the process of social interaction with board members shape the

   meaning of the leadership experience?

<div align="center">Vignette</div>

Setting: It is a November weekend in Washington, DC and nonprofit presidents, chairs,

and executive directors are attending the yearly National Leadership Forum conducted by

BoardSource. After the morning session there is a conference luncheon for women board

presidents. Organizers requested that attendees sit with individuals that they have not met

before as a networking tool. Four women ranging in ages from 40 to 72 years old and

coming from diverse socioeconomic backgrounds sit together at a table close to the buffet

area. After realizing that their motivation behind choosing this table was based on hunger

and having a laugh over it, they start to talk about their motivation for nonprofit work.

Kara: I know this may sound trite, but the church has been important to me and I want to

do something that furthers God's work in the world. I just always thought that I ought to

be involved in something that gave back to society. The two things I try to limit a lot of

my nonprofit work towards are addressing the issues of poverty and racism. That is why I

got involved in City Community Change, a nonprofit that provides a full range of prevention-oriented community-based programs.

Megan: For me, as much as I support and value the arts and believe they are an important part of every community, I wanted to help people who were down and out and need a boost through education and training, so Job Training of America appealed to me on that level. I feel that those of us who don't have hardship need to help those that do. I have been on this board for a long time and am finishing up my term as president.

Clara: Megan and Kara I understand where you are coming from, I am drawn to human issues too. I'm not really into fundraising for a building or capital improvement. I wanted to do things that had a social impact. I will serve wherever I think people are hurting and also dealing with change, making a difference, making change.

Lee: Yeah, I have always had that spirit of giving back to the community, primarily through service too. During the morning session I attended, we talked about the reasons people join boards. It seems we all are alike with our commitment to making a difference. I'm smiling because I see you all have a passion like I do. The other thing for me is focusing on children's issues in the community. I want my own children to recognize the importance of supporting their community, not just financially, but also giving their time.

Clara: It looks like I am the old lady of the bunch, and since I know what I had to go through when I served as a board leader, I'm curious about the three of you. Tell me about your path to leadership. Megan, did you say you are just finishing up your term?

Megan: Yes. I have been with JTA off and on for about 12 years. I am the only person on the board that doesn't work fulltime, so I sometimes question what I bring to the table

and how I ended up as president. I think it is hard to feel legitimate not working in the real world. My experience as president of the Junior League and participating in the community leadership development program, however, has helped train me for this role. I'm just completing my two year term. I've tried to create a relaxed and comfortable environment. I feel like I've brought a warmth to the board that's different than past presidents who did do a beautiful job, who were accountants and lawyers and just had a different approach.

 Lee: When I moved back to my hometown several years ago, I was in an environment that I could volunteer and make a difference in the community. About six years ago I gave up my own business to focus on my three children and the work at the Children's Center. I had been on the board about 10 years and chaired several committees, and then once I was on the executive committee I knew I was in line to be president. I kept saying I felt there was someone better. Don't get me wrong, I was thrilled to be president, it just wasn't my goal. As you all know, as women we have conflicting demands and roles and I was concerned about being able to devote enough time to do a good job. What about you Clara?

Clara: Looking back at several decades of volunteer work I can say that I have never sought to be president. I am not one to aggressively put myself out to do things, but if I am asked I will say yes. Sometimes you fall into it. Your committee work gets acknowledged and then you are asked to do more. I have served on lots of boards and have moved up to be president of several. I guess it is like my mamma said, "go and do." When I have been a board chair it has usually been because I had a vision and wanted to

see something happen. Kara, I know you've been involved with boards for about as long as I have. What is your take on this?

Kara: I think what happens for most of us is, if you are a good board member, you do your work, you participate well in meetings, you prepare for the meetings, you read your materials, and then quite often you move into roles as chair of a committee. A lot of it for me, as I recall, was that process of trying to be a good competent citizen, and then you move to the level of committee leadership or serving as chair of a particular program or something. Then you are asked to go the next level and either be vice chair or chair and you kind of work your way up through the rungs. I guess that has been the way that I personally have reached the accomplishments I have. Because of that style, it is interesting that women go through every hoop before we get to that top level and I know for me that was very much the case.

Megan: Wow, do you realize we all really haven't sought out to be a president or chair, but somehow here we are? There is definitely something in each of us that is noticeable to others. You have me curious now, so I have to ask about your leadership style and what qualities you value.

Kara: Good question! When you are used to being a leader in your own business I think it makes it easier to step into that role in other areas, because I have confidence about doing it and that is a big part of what makes it work. I also try to make sure we have strong people to chair committees and build consensus in the decision making process. In my opinion, leading people is not an issue of age, gender, or race, but an ability to peg people for how much you think they can do and then ask them, don't tell them.

Lee: I have a lot of experience in fundraising and that's valuable in leading a nonprofit. I am a great believer in strategic planning and the need for vision. I was a good board chair in that I knew where we needed to go and was able to articulate a vision. Teamwork is essential. To provide a service you have to collaborate, and part of that is building a board with a balance of skills. Women's leadership is a less competitive, more cooperative style. I think it is an asset, since with a nonprofit, it's not about win/lose, it's about how you collaborate.

Clara: Very true Lee. In addition to experiences that you two just mentioned, I bring a deep sense of appreciation of where I come from, both in terms of being a woman and being African –American and coming out of poverty. I bring a sense of balance between the board and staff. I have a clear vision and can be firm in my convictions. I also have a sense of humor. You need to remember it's not about you. It's about listening and gathering in points of view and doing what is best for the organization. Okay Megan, you started this discussion, so you need to answer your own question.

Megan: I think of myself as a teacher because I have a desire to develop skills in others. It's important to encourage participation and allow teamwork to take place. Another quality is working with a group and being receptive to adverse points of view. I try to listen and get input from others. If you are leading a nonprofit organization it is critical to have a commitment to the mission, a belief in the agency, and that it [agency] fits with your own values.

Lee: Ladies we are classic textbook: teamwork, collaboration, and commitment to the organization. Now let me ask you your opinion on a topic we discussed in a breakout

session this morning, which was finding the best leadership approach. My personal response was that every organization needs a slightly different president at each time in their history, so there is a certain calling to that. Different talents are called for and you hope the match is a good one, I was lucky with the Children's Center, where the match was a very good one and they needed my skills at a time when I had the time to give them. What do you think is the secret to success?

Megan: There is no secret or one formula. The qualities of a good board president depend on the size of the organization, the staff that you have, and your board. It is a team effort, and a good staff and executive director are essential. Also vision – it's what pushes you to lead, because if you don't have a vision of where you want to go, then you can't figure out the right kind of leadership approach.

Clara: You have to adapt and revise your leadership style to different situations. Being the only woman often at the table, and being the only minority woman at the table, I had to adapt. I had to have a great deal of knowledge and information and use a convincing style that sometimes was not quite what I would normally do. It was the need to have others understand that I was not using the powerful position or the power itself, but the power of knowledge to influence their behavior. In my experience that has been key in some of the leadership roles I have been in, especially when most of the others leaders were male.

Kara: Lee, I slightly disagree with my peers' answers to your question. There are some basic responsibilities for all board presidents: personnel issues, fundraising, financial commitment, policies and administration, decision-making, representing the agency in

the community. So I think there is more similarity in terms of your style when you serve on a nonprofit board. Also, every president has to focus on what is best for the organization and maintain a cooperative relationship with the executive director. And this president just focused on the waiters bringing out our lunch, so let's make our way through the line so we can get back to the table to resume our conversation!

The vignette above was written for the purpose of describing a few of the major themes that emerged during this study. The remainder of Chapter IV explains the actual findings that are a result of the data analysis process.

<div align="center">Data Analysis by Individual Research Question</div>

Question 1: How do women leaders describe their path to leadership within the nonprofit setting? What meaning do they give to this experience?

Research Question 1 covers the motivation, characteristics and rationale behind nonprofit work and board involvement. The data discussed in the following paragraphs were derived from participants' answers to inquiry into family, educational and professional background, how they got involved in nonprofit work and progressed to a leadership position, and why the individual was interested or invested in a particular organization.

Characteristics and Motivations for Board Membership

Giving back to the community and making a difference were the common themes behind getting involved in nonprofit work. Seven of the eight participants spoke passionately about what motivated them to make a commitment to an organization. Mary summed this up when she said, "It is a passion. Everyone has their own reason to be on a

board, but, for me, I truly felt like we were making a difference in the city. Being a part of touching children's lives and along with that having my own children involved and [for them] to realize how important it is to support their community not just financially, but through their time." Sara echoed this sentiment, "Just to be involved in something that is ultimately going to benefit the larger community. To feel as though you have a little something to do with getting a person in the right direction is tremendous."

Family influence was another motivator. Three of the individuals come from families with a history of philanthropy and two mentioned that their fathers were mentors as well as former board presidents; three others acknowledged their parents.

"I come from a family of preachers and teacher," Tora said, "so education was an important part of my youth . . . as well as a sense of commitment to improving the community and being involved in civic activities." Anne said, "They [parents] were always doers. They didn't have a lot of money, but were always involved in doing that [volunteering] kind of thing, so I grew up in that environment." For Maureen her foundation was her mother, "I really think it started with my mother. Momma was always sending us to go and do. She never asked you would you mind, she would just say, and you just did it."

These women recognized and reflected on how powerful an effect parents can have on your interests and motivations. It encompassed not just the giving of money but also time and commitment. Another factor related to leadership for the participants was education.

Educational Influence

During the data analysis process the researcher discovered that four of the participants attended women's colleges, two participants graduated from historically black institutions and two others attended all girls' high schools. Questions about how this segregated educational experience may have affected them as female leaders were not specifically asked, but some of the women made note of it. Stewart mentioned her boarding school experience was "open and liberal" and she was able to assume leadership roles. While talking about her educational background Lisa said, "There is nothing like a women's college education to make you think you can do anything. Even if you can't, you don't think you can't." Anne commented on her experience at a women's college and also as president of the Junior League, "It was an opportunity in a comfort zone to learn and grow and not be afraid to try things without being intimidated by men."

An educational experience that encourages expressing your opinion and exchanging ideas in a comfortable environment fosters self confidence. Research in single sex education suggests that girls benefit personally, socially, and academically from this environment. Perhaps this type of education contributed to developing leadership skills, provided the opportunity for the exploration of roles, and fostered a positive socialization process for these women.

Leadership Path

None of the women leaders stated that they had the goal or actively pursued becoming the president or chair of their organization. Most of the participants did

however, have a long history with their organizations and experience serving on several committees.

Tora commented, "I never particularly wanted to be a president, but what happens is you do your work as a board member, prepare and participate in meetings and you quite often move into a role as chair." Sara remarked, "When I went on the board I never really had the desire to be the president at all, but it just got to the point where it made sense. I'm glad it is over, I prefer to be one of the people who's doing the tasks rather than having to thinking about what has to happen next." Lisa had a similar response, "I don't like to be president and I would rather be on a committee and have a task." Stewart said, "I don't think of myself as a leader . . . but I just kept being on board committees and gained responsibility. I love it [being chair], so you want to keep doing it." Mary commented, "I don't think people should go in thinking they are going to end up being leaders of that organization; I think it is a matter of seeing how they interact with people. . . . I knew I was in line to be president. I kept saying I felt there was someone better. I was thrilled to be president; it just was not my goal."

These findings are consistent with traditional gender stereotypes that women typically function in supporting roles handling day to day responsibilities and are not likely to be recognized as leaders. Subconsciously, it is likely that these women viewed themselves as not worthy of leadership positions because of established gender expectations.

Meaning and Reflection on Experience

What has been the overall impact of this experience for these women? Participants were asked to talk about how board leadership has affected other areas of their life and to describe the most rewarding part of the experience. Reflections were intertwined and overlapped. This experience had professional, personal, and social meaning for these women. The following quotes express the personal/social impact:

- "The most rewarding part of the experience is to see yourself being taken places you never dreamed you would be taken, whether that is socially, emotionally, mentally, or physically."

- "Getting to meet people and getting to discover things about myself, I learned I could speak, that I had a voice."

- "The experience of reaffirming the dignity of the human spirit."

The common thread within these quotes is a combination of professional and personal meaning:

- It [being president] makes me think about my role on other boards a lot more. I am thinking: where am I going with that, what could I do differently? . . . It has been a wonderful learning experience for me with the community and got me so much more interested and engaged and involved in issues that normally I might not have.

- "I have met some of the most wonderful people and had the opportunity to see how other places work. I have been able to bring back some of that great wisdom and learning back to the business."

- "Learning things I never would have learned. Exposure to people from different backgrounds and different walks of life, but all passionate about the same cause."

- [The personal benefit for me is] "number one being able to be a part of what I hope is a positive activity and secondly, the professional development side of it."

- "I think seeing an organization make significant progress towards its mission. On a personal level, I really enjoy the people."

Women tend to have a more holistic approach to life and their sense of self is derived from the various roles they fill. Women focus on human values which is the common thread that runs through their personal, professional, and social spheres.

Question 2: What is it like to be a female leader of a nonprofit organization? What meaning do they give to their position?

The data used to discuss Research Question 2 emerged from some of the interview questions asked for Questions 1 and 3, specifically in the areas of background and leadership path. Observations of board meetings also provided insight into this phenomenon. Additional questions focused on the relationship between professional and/or social status and the ability to be influential on a board and if the nonprofit sector is an area where leadership opportunities are open to women.

Women and Leadership

Unsolicited comments about the female leadership experience surfaced throughout the first set of interviews. The researcher did, however, specifically ask about leadership opportunities for women in the nonprofit sector and followed up on statements relevant to this topic during the second round of interviews.

The older participants were more thoughtful in their responses and commented on their lifelong experience. They expressed that rising to a leadership position was the result of hard work, knowledge and commitment. "I think the experience that many women have and how we get to the top level is that we have done all the other things and done them well. It is interesting that women often must go through every hoop before we get to the top level. I know for me that was very much the case."

Another quotation that captures a similar feeling of overcoming prejudice and the effect of that experience came from a 72-year-old participant: "As a result of being born black and female in America I have had some experience that have come to me as a result of my race and my gender. Now I have other experiences as a result of my age. So these experiences shape me in terms of my thinking when an issue comes up and I look at it through that prism." One of the participants in her 60s said, "I guess partly because of my education and partly because of my personality, I figure if you do a good job people will respect you and there are always those types who will try to put you down because you a woman, but that's life."

Lisa talked about witnessing the transition of women in leadership roles, "In the 60s and early 70s you saw women who managed to achieve despite their social or familial roles and a lot of prejudice and I respect them a great deal. Then you see your generation had different opportunities and the super woman thing is part of my generation and now you see the younger women defining their own leadership."

Although the participants share similar leadership experiences the meaning given to those experiences is a reflection of age and generation. The older participants recalled

the need to prove themselves capable of leading through time, hard work, and a strong knowledge base. They were often the only woman or one of a few women on a board. The younger participants did experience obstacles, but the meaning they gave to the experience was also influenced by their personal and professional roles. They face the modern dilemma of balancing work and family and the challenge of setting limits. These younger women are cognizant of these conflicting demands and will not sacrifice one for the other:

- "I am not willing to have it make me crazy. There is just no way, so something that I made very clear to them when I agreed to take the position was you know I can give but so much. . . . If it is going to be negative why in the heck would I do it? I have 3 children and you know I will not schedule meetings that will interfere with my family and it just hasn't been an issue."

- "It did take a toll on my children, because I am really involved with my children and I will never forget and this is really one thing that made me not want to be president again is when my children were more excited about me finishing the presidency than getting out of school for the summer. I think they were tired of the phone call and the last minute emergencies, me being up really late working and really not being able to go into church, and not being able to do volunteer work at schools."

- " I think the ones [women] that are more my age because they are so full between their own career and their family they can only take on so much board work, so I

think there is always still that community volunteer that you need, you know a lot

of the board presidents now are retired executives."

- "I told my husband, we spend all this time [entertaining nonprofit or professional

   acquaintances]. I've realized it's time for me not to do it as much. I mean it's

   everything you read about, it's like that homing in instinct again to come back

   with family."

Do men and women differ in their approach to leadership? Several participants

commented and believe there are differences in men and women's leadership style. The

following passages are a few examples:

- "Men don't always understand a woman's approach to leadership, so if there are

   enough guys on the board that don't like the way a woman processes the meeting,

   well, it is highly unlikely that the guys are going to see that as a leadership

   opportunity. So there is a bit of that, but you can't get intimidated."

- "I think that [developing leadership] is a real issue for women, because women

   often have a less confrontational and a less needing to be in front style, working

   behind the scenes, so they don't necessarily get the credit that a man might."

- "In order to be a leader you have to grab the things that need to get done and push

   to get them done. Some women feel uncomfortable with assuming forceful roles."

The perception of gender differences has been an impediment to women seeking

advancement. These perceptions and a lack of understanding can put women at a

disadvantage. Participants acknowledged these obstacles and understood that they must

contend with a certain amount of intimidation that comes with the territory. However, they were not willing to be denied leadership opportunities.

When specifically asked about the opportunities for women leaders in the nonprofit sector, some of the participants spoke in general, while others mentioned their own experience. With several decades of knowledge to draw on Maureen responded, "Historically speaking that [nonprofit sector] has been the first place and perhaps the only place outside of the PTA that women had a chance to exercise their leadership skills. Perhaps because of our nurturing instinct women see things that men don't and tend to start organizations, drives, and clubs to resolve community problems."

Two of the younger women spoke of their own leadership roles. Sara was adamant when she said, "I have never ever seen what people have been talking about when they say you can't get involved in certain things because you didn't grow up here or you don't have the right last name. . . . Once the outside community knows you are interested or willing to do those things, and I was the first minority woman in a major law firm, that kind of stands out, whether you want it to or not. I just started getting pulled into a lot of directions." Page was quick to remark, "The Jewish Community [in this city] is not the least bit sexist in my mind and so I would say, there have probably been as many women presidents of agencies as men.

The data uncovered a difference between the older and younger participant's perceptions about barriers to board involvement. These younger women did, however, recognize that there is still a lack of female leadership in the nonprofit sector:

- "It helps that there are more women who are coming… I mean, we still don't have as many women in the business environment here to really look at as examples, but its great when you see women with that kind of background helping the nonprofits learn more about running as a business and having a lot of those insights, so I definitely see tremendous opportunities both in boards or just working in a more visible role for the organization."

- "I mean there hadn't been a lot of women [leaders] even with the arts which is viewed as more of a thing women get involved in."

- "But you wonder if the leadership role is focusing in large part on who can help generate fundraising activities."

- "I think there would be some barrier to women, not because they are women so much, but because the only person who is likely to get those top positions on the boards are going to be business people. To the extent that women are not as involved in the business world that is the barrier that I see. But I think a competent woman who has that business background . . . would have just as much opportunity for leadership."

- "A lot of women have gone into really strong professions now and so a lot of their skills are sought after, . . . but I think women still have, a long way to go."

These women have a positive outlook on the opportunity for women to gain leadership roles and believe that as women make progress in the for-profit sector it will be reflected in the nonprofit sector.

President as Change Agent

When asked about whether the president initiates change or if it comes from the board, seven of the eight participants felt it was the board or committees that initiated change. This may explain why the majority of the participants would rather be involved in committee work where they feel they have a greater opportunity to create change. This response is gender specific as research asserts that women gain power by relationship building and focusing on achieving group goals.

- "The group needs to feel that they are part of that change that has been identified and determined, and needs to be implemented."

- "I have been trained that as a chair of an organization that you are more of the director or conductor, so rather than influence policy you are trying to encourage other people to voice their opinions."

- "As a president you listen to everyone, bring unity and consensus. As a member I can talk to you and I can convince you one on one this is my position."

- "I agree with that because as board president you are really enabling other people to lead and as a member of the board you can lead yourself."

- "I think it depends on your role. This is probably less true for me at the [organization] than it may be for me in some other agency. It is often better if it comes up through a committee, which is really the right way for things to happen.

- "I think whoever has a good idea, everybody ought to listen. I think it probably depends a little bit on the nature of the board. As a board member you can certainly instigate change or look at change."

- "As board president I thought I would have more of a chance to implement change, instead of just trying to keep everything afloat and stable, but my term was during a difficult time."

The one dissenting opinion was Tora, "I would say that the board president has more opportunity to create change than the normal working member. Much of that is because of the networking opportunities, the opportunity to speak and be heard, the intensive involvement with the executive director in the planning role . . . the point of action is the president's role."

Question 3: What qualities do these women ascribe to their success as leaders in the nonprofit sector?

This question covers several themes and topics, so for analysis purposes it will be divided into the following sections: a) action oriented, b) fostering collaboration, c) adaptable leadership approach, d) role definition and power, e) vision, f) effective board members, and g) professional and social status.

Action Oriented

This group of individuals is highly motivated to get things done and, so the term "action oriented" is an appropriate descriptor. As the researcher progressed through the data analysis stage this theme seemed to jump out from the pages.

- "I can't stand to see people twiddle their thumbs and not move the process along. My parents were doers. I can't just step back and watch . . . I have to get in there and do something."

- "I can't play bridge all day; it's not me, so doing something like this works and meetings don't bore me. When I have been board chair it has usually been because I had a vision and I wanted to see something happen."

- "Do the things you say you are going to do."

- 'I am not one to sit around and play tennis; there is so much need out there. I want to make a difference, not just sit around and talk about it."

- "You say, well, why isn't this being done and then you do it."

- "Go and do, take control. I think it is essential that people are not allowed to flounder, to take up time, because time is valuable."

Fostering Collaboration

All of the women consistently mentioned collaboration and teamwork when describing their own leadership style. These themes were identified as critical to their role as president or chair. When asked about the basic capabilities of a board president, Tora responded, "Number one would be the belief in collaboration, partnership and teamwork, and a commitment to those principles." Maureen identified the capabilities of "vision, the ability to listen, and the ability to pull together, tie together, and hold together different points of view, so all of us win." Other remarks inclusive of this theme included:

- "Being able to work with a group and being able to be receptive to adverse points of view, being able to encourage participation from others, the ability to allow teamwork to take place. The desire to develop skills in other people and believe you cannot and don't need to do everything."

- "I'd like to think consensus building would be one of the elements I would like to portray as my leadership approach. I think being able to listen to what the needs are and what I can do to help advance those interests and involve the rest of the organization."

- "Build consensus where it needs to be built. . . . I do a lot of delegating to the committee chairs. I put a lot of faith and trust in people."

- "Ability to communicate clearly. The ability to listen and the ability to keep people energized and interested and excited."

- As president you are in a leadership position but you can't do it all yourself and you have too much responsibility and you have got to make sure that you rely on others.

- "Teamwork is essential; to provide a service you have to collaborate."

Adaptable Leadership Approach

What is/was the participant's approach to successfully leading a nonprofit organization? The majority of women believed in a flexible approach, evaluating and responding to the needs of the agency. Another consideration was whether or not they possessed the skill set to make it a favorable opportunity for leadership?

Lisa acknowledged the fit between individual qualities and the needs of the organization: "Every organization needs a slightly different president at each time in their history. So there is a certain calling to that. . . . Different talents are called for and you hope the match is a good one and I was lucky with [names organization] where the match was a very good one and my skills were needed at a time when I had the time to give

them. . . . I think one of the things as part of leadership is you have to work with the art of the possible, if an organization isn't ready to go someplace, you can't take it there." Other women acknowledged that there is more than one way to lead:

- "There is no one formula to leadership; I have noticed different traits in different people."

- "The qualities of a good board president depend on the size of the organization, the staff that you have, and your board."

- "Your role as president sometimes depends on the point where the organization is, for example a start up versus one in existence for a long time."

- "I think everyone defines their own role. Everyone brings a different approach."

Maureen had a slightly different answer to this question. "There are some basic responsibilities for all board presidents: personnel issues, fundraising, financial commitments, policies and administration, decision-making, representing the agency in the community. So I think there is more similarity in terms of your style when you serve on a board."

Definitions and approaches to leadership have changed over time along with the work environment. Can leadership be observed and learned? Do individuals have the potential and capacity to lead? Several participants described the benefit of watching and learning from others:

- "I've seen so many different approaches. I guess the quality that I have liked the most in people and tried to emulate myself are qualities inclusive with the

staff…learning how to incorporate staff desires, staff needs with what the board

policies are so trying to be able to sort that."

- I observe things in people that I like and think work well and try to see if maybe

    that would work well in this environment."

- "Watching people who do it well and those who don't."

- "When I first came to [names city] I had several older men and women take me

    under their wing. . . . So I could watch these different leadership styles and then

    you have got to define your own."

- "I have served on so many boards, I have had the real benefit of being able to

    watch many different players and how they operate . . . both good and bad."

Research supports the idea that leadership qualities can be acquired by observing

others. By watching board leaders interact, these women gained an understanding of the

organizational environment. This observation also allowed the participants to evaluate

how they would respond in similar situations. They were able to draw on these

experiences when they became leaders.

Role Definition and Power

Another factor related to successful leadership is role definition and power. How

do the participants perceive their role as president or chair and do they have the power to

get things done? Tora's comments captured her experience not just as a woman, but also

a minority:

You have to adapt and revise your leadership style to different situations. Being

the only woman often at the table, and being the only [minority] woman at the

table, I had to adapt. I had to have a great deal of knowledge and information and use a convincing style that sometimes was not quite what I would normally do, but it was the need to have others understand that I was not using the power of the position but the power of knowledge to influence their behavior. I found in my experience that has been key in some leadership roles I have been in especially when most of the other leaders were men.

Tora understood that women are not always given the same power and status as men. As a female leader, Tora used a broad base of accurate knowledge and information with a sense of confidence to build support and earn the respect of her peers.

Maureen spoke with annoyance in her voice when she said, "They [white males] would never hear your ideas or suggestions. It had nothing to do with race; I just think it was being female. It was that voice thing – you didn't say that, he said that." Stewart felt the issue is one of power and money not gender, but then acknowledged that women usually lack these: "Maybe it has got not as much to do with male/female as to who has got the power for whatever reason, I don't think it is necessarily because you are a woman if I were you know [gives name], with the same sort of bag of poker chips I think you can play the game, it is just that there are less women with that bag of chips."

The following statements illustrate different but connected perspectives of role definition and power:

- "When you are someone who is used to being a leader at your own business, it is pretty easy to step into that role and be a leader, because I have confidence about doing it, and confidence is a pretty big percentage of what makes it work."

- [Power comes from] "understanding who you have that can help you achieve your goals and asking for their help and working with them to achieve it."

- [Power comes from] "not being afraid to express you opinion and having a base of information to back up what you say."

- "I think I probably get more done by pushing enthusiasm than by dragging people along and sometimes you have to keep hammering at people with enthusiasm."

The common themes that run through the above quotes, that help define the participants' role and ability to get things done, are confidence, knowledge, communication, collaboration and modeling the way. Traditionally women's access to power has not been the same as men. These women used "feminine" leadership traits such as engaging others, sharing information, and celebrating accomplishments, then combined these with a solid knowledge base and confidence from other areas in their life to earn power and status.

Vision

What is the relationship between leadership and vision? Why is vision important? Vision is a vital part of leadership and participants were asked to describe the relationship between leadership and vision in their position as board president. All but one of the woman leaders articulated the significance of vision to the role of president or chair of their organization. Page was very direct with her response, "vision is an absolutely essential piece of leadership, I don't know how you lead anything anywhere if you don't know where you are headed." Page believes the purpose of vision is to give direction.

The importance of articulating a vision was best worded by Maureen, "I think that is what vision is, being able to paint a picture so that a person can see it even though you are not there and then begin to say we can work and make this happen . . . you lay that foundation." Maureen explained what she meant by telling a story of visiting a Caribbean country and interviewing a social worker who was walking her through an empty building they were hoping to turn into an orphanage. As they walked from empty room to empty room the woman vividly described how she envisioned the facility. "I am so caught up in her vision and I am believing it and I am taking pictures of bare space. I laugh when I tell that story to folks because it is the truth. There are people whose vision is so strong, so clear that you can see it almost like a dream," Maureen said.

Lisa mentioned two parts to vision: first, making sure the vision is "right for that organization;" second that "a leader needs to be able to motivate others and vision is one way to do it. . . . you need to be able to articulate a vision." Lisa understood the need to first do strategic planning and develop a long term vision for the organization, then translate the vision to action by engaging others through interactive leadership.

The relationship between leadership and vision was clearly described by Mary: "Vision is what pushes you to lead, if you don't have a vision of where you want the group to go, then you can't figure out the right kind of leadership to use." Vision for Mary is the inspiration and direction to build board commitment and unity. She also stated, to realize a vision "you have to have the right players in place to take it there." This statement leads into another consistently mentioned category; effective board members.

Effective Board Members

Part of the participants' success as leaders can be attributed to the other individuals serving on the organizations board. Some of the women laid the groundwork by actively recruiting board members prior to taking over as president. Others recognized the importance of matching members with appropriate responsibilities.

- The role of board president is getting the "best people to chair committees" and then "working through others to get the job done, much more than doing it yourself."

- "A board president must understand the different board members and do the best job possible of matching what the board member wants to do with the role the organization needs them to fulfill."

- "Clearly defining the role of each committee and getting the right people in place who will follow through and will get things accomplished."

- "I served on the nominating committee before [becoming president], so picking the right people to serve on any group makes a difference."

- "I got a lot of participation from board members. I knew a lot of them and probably got a lot of them on the board through my board nomination role, so they were people I felt close to, comfortable with and had a very good working relationship with."

- "I have been very fortunate to have a very talented group of board members. . . . It has been an exciting time for good people to want to come on our board and that is really what makes things happen."

- "Getting the right people to come to the forefront to help you get the work done. [You need to] try to rotate bad members off and get new people [to achieve a strong board.]"

Professional and Social Status

Participants were asked to describe the relationship between professional and/or social status and the ability to be influential on a board. In addition to the challenges women leaders face because of their gender, must they have professional or social standing to be effective and powerful? Individual responses recognized that social position, family status, and community standing are a part of board dynamics for men and women and can be both positive and negative.

- "I think and I hope I never push through something that everyone disagrees with because I have the ability to do it [because of family status and money]."

- "My firm and position has given me some credibility."

- "Unfortunately it [social status and money] is important, but you have to look at our community we have old names around and for an organization to get established sometimes you need the old names."

- "Whether it is power or status in the community I'm not sure, I think having my father's name has meant something."

- "I brought the professional piece and I've certainly experienced that members of boards bring social status or community prestige. And those are important things as well, because they help to build the network of support that is necessary for the

success of the board. What is that expression? Board members need to bring the

three W's – work, wealth and wisdom."

The participants were cognizant of the professional and social influences that are

a necessary part of most nonprofit boards and how these influences may have benefited

them. The leadership success of these women, however, is a result of what they do, not

who they are.

Question 4: How does the process of social interaction with board members shape the

meaning of the leadership experience?

The importance of the social interaction of the board experience came through

loud and clear in the data. When discussing this social aspect participants reflected on

how this interaction affected them as a member of a group and as an individual. The

benefit of this interaction is two-fold for these women: the reward of working with others

towards a common goal and the self-actualization they derive from the experience. The

women were able to express what meaning this had for them as a leader and as a person:

- "You really have to focus and hear all that is said and also what is not said, I think

  that can even be more pertinent in a board setting. Board members are not going

  to express all that is on their minds, and if there is a way that you can dig in and

  pull that out, that can sometimes be the most important information. I think that

  enhances your ability to lead, to be president, and really make a difference."

- "Just observing sometimes how other board members interact has helped me learn

  how much more positive there can be in letting everybody participate. I have

become more aware of the level of participation around the room. I try to hear what it is they are asking for, or what their actions or words are asking for."

A willingness and an ability to listen has been labeled a female trait as well as a valuable leadership characteristic. The above quotes convey how important listening and observing are to these women as board presidents. The perception to recognize nonverbal signs and then provide the opportunity for members to express their thoughts requires a keen understanding of human dynamics within a group structure.

The importance of making connections with board members is conveyed in the next three quotations. The social experience was a part of not separate from the leadership experience:

- "The social aspect of meeting people and having the opportunity to work with people. I think some of the most fun that you can have is working with someone planning something, it is just an enriching fun way to have human interaction."

- "The personal reward is two-fold: one, seeing an organization moving in the direction you think it should and the second thing is developing wonderful friendships."

- "It is just a very family oriented group. I feel very close to everybody on the board. You know to have a group of people that you really don't socialize with and know that well and still feel close to them is unique. I enjoy the piece of working with people. I like to be challenged to think and learn."

The researcher can also draw on the observations from the board meetings she attended. Anne, the chair of a social service nonprofit, created an environment where

both the men and women were comfortable asking questions and bring up issues. There seemed to be a bond between Anne and the board and the meeting was balanced between completing agenda items and lighthearted moments. She made a point of recognizing individual contributions and celebrating accomplishments. "Thanks to the staff for the wonderful job they did. My mother always told me not to single out children, but I feel occasionally, I want to single someone out for their hard work. [gives name] went beyond the call of duty. She worked so hard in putting this together."

Page is the president of a member-serving organization. She started off the meeting recognizing the efforts of the group and acknowledging birthdays. She has a direct approach in getting members involved, "We have an issue that we thought would be best addressed by the board as a whole working in breakout groups. . . . I think we will have a sense of what we want to do once we have talked in our groups and reported back."

Stewart is the chair of social service nonprofit. Her demeanor is casual, yet professional, and this was how the board meetings were conducted. Communication was free flowing, interactive, laugher was interjected and several times applause was given to member efforts on projects. Stewart spoke of using enthusiasm to get a point across during one of the interviews. She showed this during a board meeting when commenting on a member's report, "It's so exciting when we can quantify our successes."

It was important for these women to create a positive environment where interaction was free flowing. Recognizing and valuing the contributions of others was another key element. It was clear from the board observations that the participants

enjoyed what they were doing and that they wanted board members to share in this social experience.

Relationship with Executive Director

How would you describe your relationship with the executive director? This was one of the questions used to shed light on the participant's leadership style and social interaction. The assumption being that a board president has frequent contact and works closely with the executive director. Seven of the eight women stressed the importance of this association to their success as president. Recurring words used to describe what they meant by a good working relationship were "partnership," "cooperation," "frequent communication," and "mutual respect." Another key part of the rapport was understanding the staff and board dynamics. The following quotes are examples:

- "The other piece of it is the board and the executive director must have a good working relationship. I've seen some boards that don't have that situation and it can really destroy a board."

- "Establish and maintain frequent communication and a relationship with the executive director. I think the board is looking to you to have that."

- "You [board presidents] should work effectively with the director of the agency. Have respect for what they do and a kind of recognition that it is pretty hard to work with a board."

- "Maintain a cooperative supportive relationship with the executive director and whatever you do don't micromanage."

- "Pointing back to how important it is to like that executive director, or be in simpatico with them is absolutely critical. I can't imagine people who would ascend in a leadership role and not feel comfortable with the person they have to work with."

- "It is very important to have a good relationship with the executive staff and a very trusting relationship, knowing where to butt in and where to back off."

- "I would never agree [to be president] to it if I didn't feel a whole lot of comfort in how the staff and the executive director ran the organization."

- "I was a good board chair in that I knew where we needed to go and I knew where he [executive director] wanted to go, so it was a matter of working in partnership. . . . I really understand that the line between staff and the board is important to honor."

The participants made perfectly clear the critical nature of this relationship to their success as leaders and to the success of the organization. This was observed during the board meetings as the board president sat next to the executive director during all but one of the meetings. The president ran the meetings, but the executive director was a significant participant as questions or agenda items were sometimes deferred to him. The exchanges between the two in all cases were supportive and respectful.

Summary

The data analysis reported in the chapter provided descriptive information from women leaders of nonprofit boards about their perceptions of their characteristics and motivations for nonprofit involvement, leadership style, role definition and power, and

reflections on the experience. Themes and categories were outlined for each of the research questions.

       In the final chapter, "Conclusions and Implications" the findings from this chapter will be discussed and linked with prior research, major assertions will be stated and suggestions for further research will be mentioned.

CHAPTER V

CONCLUSIONS AND IMPLICATIONS

Introduction

This chapter will discuss the results reported in Chapter IV in relationship to the

research outlined in Chapter II. Recognizing that participants' descriptions of their

leadership experience are both similar and different, those similarities and differences are

explored and analyzed. The analysis of data revealed that most of these women shared

similar experiences, leadership traits and motivations.

Major themes that emerged from the data include: (a) commitment to the

mission/making a difference, (b) rise to presidency, not methodical, (c) action oriented,

(d) fostering collaboration (e) adaptable leadership approach, and (f) social interaction.

Several of the themes are similar. They are not mutually exclusive, as they do interact

with one another.

Recommendation for further research in this area will also be cited.

Purpose of the Study

The purpose of this study was to identify and describe the factors that might

account for the success of women leaders on nonprofit boards of directors**.** With the

recognition that women leaders may describe this phenomenon differently, those

differences were compared and analyzed. The goal was to understand and describe the

experience of being a female board president. The primary areas of focus were (a)

characteristics and motivations, (b) leadership style, (c) role definition and power, and (d) advantages to being on a board.

Research Design

A case study design was used to obtain an in-depth understanding of the phenomenon of women leaders on nonprofit boards of directors. In-depth interviewing, observations with field notes, participant review, and written materials were utilized as data collection techniques. Selection of participants for this study involved purposeful, criterion-based sampling. The researcher selected subjects based on their knowledge and experience with the phenomenon under investigation.

Discussion of Major Themes

Commitment to the Mission/ Making a Difference

The path to leadership for these women started with a passion and dedication to their organization, with the goal of making their community a better place. All but one participant expressed strong feelings on this topic. According to Griffin (1999, p. 6) "women are more likely than men to exhibit altruistic behavior," and since most nonprofit organizations are involved with charitable work, there is a greater likelihood that women will be committed and passionate about their agency's mission.

Whether these individuals were involved at the inception of the organization or were recruited later on, each one came with a belief and commitment to the mission. This is consistent with the NCNB survey results (2000) that reported most people join a board because of the organization's mission. Participants talked about understanding the organization, having a love for what you are doing, keeping focused on what is best for

the agency, and staying on target. Nonprofit leaders want to advance a shared meaning and purpose of the organization. Vision is what transforms the organization's mission into action. Research on gender and leadership suggests that women communicate a vision by engaging others, sharing information and encouraging support. Without passion and enthusiasm a leader's message is lost and empty.

Helgesen (1998) states that the nonprofit sector is where people can express and often discover their real passion, which may have a profound effect on how they earn their living (p. 103). For four of the eight participants, their volunteer work and paid employment have been intertwined within the nonprofit area, as they have made a commitment to this sector personally and professionally.

Issues first addressed by women's voluntary efforts continue to be the major areas of importance for these individuals: education, health, housing, and equal opportunity. These women exemplify Duca's (1996) traditional idea of volunteer board service as a duty of public service to the community. The following participant comments express this traditional belief:

- "I have always had that spirit of giving back to the community primarily through service."

- "I just always thought that my work ought to be involved in something that gave back to society."

- "I tend to get involved in organizations that are really trying to do something in this community."

Rise to Presidency, not Methodical

Kouses and Posner (1987) lists the practices of taking risks, having a shared vision, collaboration, modeling the way, and recognizing individual contributions as common to successful leaders. Analysis of the data revealed that the participants demonstrate these effective leadership qualities, so it is not surprising that they progressed to positions of power. The path to leadership, however, was not necessarily sought after or a logical progression. As mentioned in Chapter IV, each individual clearly stated that they did not pursue being president or chair. Part of the explanation for that could be reflected in their perception that a board member can get more accomplished that a president. These women first and foremost wanted to make a difference and have the ability to make change.

Aburdene and Naisbitt (1992) state that a career for most women can be a "zigzag course" and the same can be said for most of the participants. Women often have conflicting demands and roles, and finding balance has both positive and negative effects on leadership opportunities. Some of the women who had the choice limited their term as president, because of these demands.

There is another possible explanation worth mentioning as to why the path to leadership is not a direct one. Carli (1999) states, the dilemma women face is when they have the ability and competence to lead; their influence may be underscored by the lack of legitimacy. For two of the participants, the lack of legitimacy came from within themselves; one because she did not hold a professional position and the other because of what she felt was an insufficient skill set.

- "I don't know what I bring to this, I think it is hard to feel legitimate not working in the real world."

- "I realized that there were a lot smarter people than myself, a lot more capable people . . . [but] loving what you are doing makes up for some deficiencies that you have."

Board experiences and leadership opportunities for some of the older participants included encounters where they felt held back and had to prove themselves over a period of time because they were women. Results of a study done by Irby and Brown (1995) reported what these women described: The participants perceived that men have legitimate power based on gender, while women tend to gain authority over time and with hard work.

The younger participants articulated concerns for balancing their family and professional obligations and how those affected the way they approached their leadership role. However, these younger women expressed that being a woman did not hinder their chance for leadership opportunities. Although it should be noted that two of the participants come from philanthropic families well known in the community and another individual has high professional status which could explain why they would be sought-after and valuable assets to a board. Those participants offered the following comments, which gives reason to question their response to leadership opportunities:

- "I'm sure the thought was, you know, if we can make her president we have a shot of getting a really big gift from her family."

- "My father is a big mentor. He has been so involved in the community and on lots of boards and he has been involved in the [organization] too."

- "I think that we as a [business] have been very positive and then for us to have the kind of access to other people, other interests, whatever, if we can help bring that to the organizations that we get involved in, than I think they benefit from it as well."

BoardSource (2002a) identifies personal characteristics that board members should possess, which include: the ability to listen, analyze, and think clearly; sensitivity to differing views; preparation and attendance at board meetings; willingness to contribute financially and personally; an interest to improving fundraising, recruitment and fiduciary skills; and the ability to work with people individually and in groups. Drucker (1990) contends, a nonprofit leader must first, have a "willingness, ability, and self-discipline to listen;" second "a willingness to communicate and be understood;" and third "a willingness to realize how unimportant you are compared to the task" (pp. 18, 20). These qualities are prevalent throughout the interview transcripts and observations. Participants mentioned the importance of constantly developing listening skills, communicating in a clear, positive and enthusiastic manner, and remembering that, "It's not about you."

In her study of men's and women's leadership performance, Rosener (1990) credits a woman's power to personal characteristics rather than organizational rank. The personal aspect was an important piece for all the participants. Two of the women described this approach to leading: "My strength has been the people part of it," Anne

said. She created a relaxed and comfortable board environment, as was observed during the board meetings. She recognizes individual contributions made by both staff and board members and ran the meeting in an unceremonious manner. Stewart defined her leadership style as "casual." "To me there is no rank, there is no hierarchy, there is no protocol, except for being polite to people, people can make jokes, if points of order are needed fine, but on the whole let's get the job done."

Action Oriented

Despite differences in backgrounds and socioeconomic status, these women are all intelligent and highly motivated. All but one of the participants earned post baccalaureate degrees. Some hold professional positions, run their own businesses, or have held paid positions in the nonprofit sector. Bennis and Nanus (1985) talk about translating a vision into action, that a dynamic person transforms "purpose into action." A few examples of action quotes from the participants are as follows:

- "I have to get in there and do something."

- "Go and do."

- "I wanted to see something happen"

- "Do the things you say you are going to do."

These dynamic women combine a commitment to the mission with motivation towards goal achievement. If power is defined as the ability to perform effectively, then a source for power for these women comes from their capability to get things done. A willingness to assume more responsibility, accepting challenges, and achieving results contributed to their rise to leadership.

Fostering Collaboration

Characteristics of leadership include the ability to work well with people individually and in groups, encouraging others to be involved in decision-making, converting personal interests into group goals, collaboration and connectiveness. These are often referred to in the literature as feminine leadership traits; however research in both the for-profit and nonprofit areas point to these as desirable skills. What was previously viewed as feminine or weak traits are now accepted as the preferred style of leadership. The power and strength of a board is that of a group bringing diverse points of view to consensus. The outcome of debate and discussion is a more involved and bonded board (Bernstein, 1997; Carver & Carver, 1996). All the participants identified these qualities when describing their leadership style. Here are a few additional quotations pertaining to what has been reported in Chapter IV on this theme:

- "Power comes from understanding who you have that can help you achieve your goals and asking for their help."

- "Collaborative approach to problem solving, having that belief or that ability to pull people into the decision-making and also given that kind of process, the ability to make decisions when it requires some leadership direction."

- "Sometimes I have to consciously recognize where I stand on an issue then step back a bit and decide whether I am willing to push it through because it is critically important or allow the group to work and I don't thinks I have every had a situation where we haven't allowed the group to work."

Adaptable Leadership Approach

Research in the area of leadership on nonprofit boards recognizes the importance of individual qualities, as opposed to one specific leadership approach. Recent changes in the nonprofit environment require board presidents and chairs to be flexible and cognizant of human behavior. As Fredrick and Atkinson (1997) state, there is no one "uniform ideal for leading," an effective leader evaluates and responds to each situation (p. 127). Thompson's study (2000) also supports this with evidence that the use of a multiframe approach is the best method of effective leadership. Participants overwhelmingly exhibit this approach and examples were cited earlier.

When asked about role definition and power the majority of participants responded with a knowledge of the basic responsibilities of a board president, but also stated the importance of understanding the organization (e.g. staff, board, current needs) and adapting to the environment. The participants talked about understanding board dynamics, recognizing that organizations are very complex, avoiding "disconnected boards," and researching the organization and staff before getting involved. As public policy professor Robin Ely confirms, "Differences in the way people lead is often driven more by the work environment than by their gender" (Leach, 1993, p. 9).

Odendahl (1994) claims women's roles within nonprofit organizations have historically mirrored maternal stereotypes. Women take on the day to day responsibilities and function in a nurturing way. This has resulted in women being limited to certain jobs within the nonprofit sector. The researcher found it interesting that most of the participants' included a nurturing component in the description of their leadership style

and perceived it as an essential part of who they were as a leader. One of the participants used a maternal analogy to describe her leadership role and put a positive spin on a stereotype. "My view is, it's my job to educate, teach, nurture, and develop the board to do what it needs to do and help them understand this is what they want to do, it's sort of like raising children," Lisa said.

Kouzes and Posner (1987) point out that successful leaders "inspire a shared vision" by effectively communicating that vision. Seven of the eight participants emphasized the relationship between leadership and vision. These women have an interactive leadership approach. According to Nanus and Dobbs (1999), sharing information and ideas advances the support and commitment to a vision.

Social Interaction

Historically, one of the reasons women engaged in volunteer activities was because it was a way to meet and interact with others as well as participate in a community. Wilson and Musick (2000) state that now volunteerism offers women greater social integration and occupational advantages. All of the women recognized that the social aspect of nonprofit work has led to their involvement in other nonprofit organizations. Four of the participants who currently work spoke about the reciprocal advantage that existed between their nonprofit and professional position, and how skills and contacts have developed in both areas.

Recently, with the focus on a more humanize work environment, leadership qualities like developing collaboration, concentrating on group goals over individual interests, and empowering others to communicate are all dependent on social contact. In

addition to the other facets of their lives, nonprofit work has contributed to making the participants well-rounded individuals. The personal rewards or benefits for these women include feelings that could be described as self-actualization.

<div align="center">Assertions</div>

Perhaps one of the most revealing findings of this study is that these women shared the same motivation and commitment to nonprofit work, as well as similar leadership qualities, despite differences in socioeconomic background, ethnicity, race, and age. Women volunteers have always outnumbered men in the nonprofit sector. A relationship seems to exist between a women's inclination to help others and her involvement and commitment to nonprofit organizations. The characteristics and motivations described by the participants support this relationship. The data revealed that these women place a high value on the social element of nonprofit work and the research supports that women overall are more likely to attach importance to helping others than are men, who place more significance on status and prestige.

The meaning given to the leadership experience did differ generationally. The older participants had a clearer understanding of themselves and were able to describe their capabilities in an articulate straight-forward manner. An explanation for this could be that they have more experience and life lessons to draw on. The common assertion of the older women was a longer more challenging road to leadership than the younger participants expressed.

The younger women tended to talk about leadership characteristics or traits in general, not specific to their own style. The researcher had to readdress this topic during

the second interview either directly or indirectly to identify their approach. When reviewing the older participants transcripts the leadership descriptors would jump up from the pages, this was not the case for the younger participants. The researcher spent more time interpreting their meaning of this experience.

The leadership qualities described by the participants and observed by the researcher do fit into traditional definitions of female leadership traits, supported by the research in Chapter II. Current research is moving away from making a distinction between men and women's leadership style and moving towards identifying successful leadership practices and basic capabilities of leaders. Gender differences appear to play a limited role, once women are given the chance and access to power. Characteristics or traits that were previously considered female are now more accepted. Whether labeled feminine or successful, the leadership model that emerged from the data was one that seems to be consistent with and successful for the nonprofit environment.

The understanding and meaning of the experience for these women was derived from the social interaction of the board and staff. As Bogdan and Biklen (1998) explain, developing a definition of self is done through a process of interactions with others. People in similar situations often develop common definitions through regular interaction, share experiences and background (p. 25).

Women serving on nonprofit boards of directors act within a framework of an organization, but it is their interpretation of the situation that defines the experience. The personal and professional benefits from board involvement described by the participants are a result of the social contact with others in this environment.

Limitations of the Study

Triangulation

One of the data collection strategies used for cross validation of sources was direct observation of board meetings. Since only three of the participants were currently serving as president, triangulation was limited. The use of different types of data collection procedures, such as a survey instrument, could have been used for all participants. Interviewing the executive directors who worked with each participant while they were board president would be another potential data source.

Transferability

Generalizability in qualitative research is also referred to as transferability. The researcher's purpose is not the generalization of results, since this study is limited to the participants and the setting being examined. Transferability refers to the application of one set of findings to another setting and the enabling of others to understand similar situations in subsequent research (McMillan & Schumacher, 2001, p. 414).

Translatability and Comparability

The purpose of the research was to seek a meaningful understanding of the phenomenon under investigation. Translatability is limited by the researcher's perceptions of the experience and is subject to the emergent nature of the research. Comparability is subject to the design components and the extent that the researcher has provided an adequate description of the study.

Trustworthiness

The researcher is the principle instrument used in data collection and therefore subjectivity must be acknowledged. The development of a trusting, empathetic relationship and the maintenance of interpersonal subjectivity were monitored through field notes, journal entries, and discussions with dissertation committee members.

Implications for Future Research

This study was pursued to discover what qualities, similar or different this group of women possessed to identify them as successful leaders. As with most research, additional questions surface which lead to further studies. The most prominent may be a comparative study of leadership qualities of men and women nonprofit chairs/presidents to determine if there is a consistent leadership model for a nonprofit board. Within that study, comparisons could be made between and among the styles of older male and younger female leaders and older female and younger male leaders. Are there differences in gender and age in leadership roles? Another area that might merit exploration is the board's perception of a female chair's strengths and weaknesses as a leader.

It would be interesting to study women as leaders in traditional male roles such as university presidents or athletic directors, similar to the nonprofit sector; women are slowing gaining access to these positions. Are there shared experiences and leadership qualities? Another group to study would be female executive directors of nonprofits, examining their characteristics, motivations and power, and their relationship with the board chair. How do paid leaders differ from volunteer leaders within nonprofit organizations?

All the participants felt there was a deficiency in the area of board development within their organization. Is there a link between this and leadership opportunities for women? In addition to women, how do boards increase minority representation to better reflect the population they serve? Research in the above areas will strengthen nonprofit boards and leadership, improve board diversity, and enhance the overall effectiveness of the organization.

Conclusions

Current research in the area of leadership has identified individual qualities and capabilities and moved away from a specific leadership style. The focus is no longer on "male" or "female" labels. The leadership practices of the women in this study are the same that researchers associate with successful leaders. Commitment to the organization's mission, communicating a vision into action, fostering collaboration, and an adaptable leadership approach all contributed to the success of these female board presidents. The implication to be drawn from this is identifying leaders by their qualities and not gender. The result will be greater representation of women on nonprofits boards and a less ambiguous position of women within this sector.

The nonprofit sector continues to grow as more programs and services are assumed by this sector. Therefore, the composition of nonprofit boards needs to evolve as constituencies are becoming broader and more diverse. The makeup and structure of boards are critical to organizational survival. There is also a need for strong leaders on nonprofit boards, as opposed to leadership by default. The typical homogeneous group of individuals who amiably agree on decisions is being replaced. Creating effective

representation involves a governing structure in which members of varied backgrounds can contribute to a common goal around the mission (Bernstein, 1997; Miller, 1999). The varied backgrounds of the participants in this study support the argument that leaders do not need to fit a certain mold or stereotype to guide an organization. Female values of collaboration, inspiring others, and recognizing accomplishments have emerged as important leadership qualities.

Nonprofits need to recognize that future leaders are out there waiting to be trained and among them are women who have transferable skills along with passion and commitment to their organizations. Nonprofit agencies who understand the value of training and board development will be cultivating their leaders of tomorrow.

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Appendices

Appendix A

Cover Letter

Month, Day, 2002

Name
Title
Street Address
City, State, Zip

Dear Salutation:

I am a doctoral candidate at Virginia Commonwealth University in the School of Education. My dissertation study is entitled "Motivations, Roles, Characteristics, and Power: Women Volunteer Leaders on Nonprofit Boards of Directors."

The purpose of this study is to identify and describe the factors that might account for the success of women leaders on nonprofit boards of directors. The goal is to understand and describe the experience of being a female board president.

In order to collect my data, I need to conduct interviews with current and former nonprofit board presidents. I am requesting your time on two different occasions; each interview will last approximately one hour. Interviews will be audio taped and you will have anonymity during the interviews as well as in print, through the use of pseudonyms**.**

Since you are currently (If you are currently) serving as a board president, I would like the opportunity to attend two board meetings to observe board operations and decision-making procedures. The names of board members and organizations will also be changed for confidentiality purposes.

Within the next few weeks I will be calling you to inquire about your willingness to participate and answer any questions you may have about my research. You are also free to withdraw from the study at any time. I have included a copy of the interview consent form, which I will review with you prior to the first interview.

I appreciate your support with my doctoral endeavors and I look forward to speaking with you soon.

Sincerely,

Bridget E. Lyons
Doctoral Candidate
Virginia Commonwealth University

Appendix B

Interview Consent Form

Motivations, Roles, Characteristics, and Power:
Women Volunteer Leaders on Nonprofit Boards of Directors

You are invited to be a participant in a research study about women leaders on nonprofit boards. Local experts in the nonprofit field selected you as a possible candidate. This study is being conducted by a doctoral student from the School of Education at Virginia Commonwealth University.

Background Information
The purpose of this study is to identify and describe the factors that might account for the success of women leaders in the nonprofit sector**.** The goal is to understand and describe the experience of being a female board president.

Procedures
If you agree to be in this study, I would ask you to do the following things:
- Participate in two tape-recorded interviews that will last about 60 minutes each.
- Permit the researcher to observe and tape-record your activities as a leader during two board meetings.

Risks and Benefits
There are no obvious risks associated with this study. There are no specific benefits to participants as a result of participating in this study. However, the research may provide insight into understanding the leadership experience of women in the nonprofit sector.

Confidentiality
Although interviews will be audio taped, you will have anonymity during the interviews as well as in print, through the use of pseudonyms. Pseudonyms cannot be used during the board meetings, but will be used when the data are transcribed.

Voluntary Participation and Withdrawal
Your participation in this study is voluntary. You may decide not to participate in the study. If you do participate, you may freely withdraw at any time. You also have the right to pass on any interview questions.

Contacts and Questions
The researcher conducting this study is Bridget Lyons. You may ask any questions you
have now. If you have questions later, you may contact her at (804) 828-4298 or
belyons@vcu.edu. Her dissertation advisor is Dr. Michael Wise and you may contact
him at (804) 278-1999. **You will be given a copy of this form to keep for your records.**

Statement of Consent
I have read the above information. All my questions about the study and my participation
in it have been answered. I freely consent to participation in this study.

_____   _____

Participant's Signature   Date

_____   _____

Researcher   Date

Appendix C

Nonprofit Board Consent Form

Dear Board Member:

I am a doctoral student from the School of Education at Virginia Commonwealth University currently doing a research study on nonprofit board presidents and boards of directors. As part of my dissertation I would like the opportunity to attend and audio tape two organizational board meetings to observe board operations and decision-making procedures.

In order to ensure confidentiality, names of board members, organizations, and the city in which the study is being conducted will be changed. Pseudonyms cannot be used during the audio taping of board meetings, but will be used when the data are transcribed.

The researcher conducting this study is Bridget Lyons. If you have questions, I can be reached at (804) 828-4298 or belyons@vcu.edu. My dissertation advisor is Dr. Michael Wise and you may contact him at (804) 828-1130. **A copy of this form will be given to your Executive Director.**

Statement of Consent
I have read the above information and I freely consent to participation in this study.

_____   _____
Signature   Date

_____   _____
Signature   Date

_____   _____
Signature   Date

_____   _____
Signature   Date

_____   _____
Signature   Date

_____   _____
Signature   Date

Appendix D

General Interview Guide

A semi structured interview format will be used for the first meeting with each

participant. Four areas of focus will frame these interviews. However, the researcher will

not determine the sequencing or exact wording of questions ahead of time. The first area

will focus on the characteristics of the individual and their motivations for involvement in

nonprofit work. Interview questions in this area will include:

1.   What is the participant's family, educational and employment background?

2.   How did the participant get involved in nonprofit work?

3.   Why is the participant interested or invested in this/these organization(s)?

        The second area will concentrate on leadership style. Questions explored in this

area will include:

1.   How does the participant describe the leadership qualities of a good board

        president?

2.   How does the participant characterize or explain her particular style of

        leadership?

3.   How did the participant move into a leadership position?

4.   How does the participant describe vision and what it means to her?

5.   How does the participant explain the relationship between leadership and vision?

        The third focus area is role definition and power. Issues will include:

1.   How does the participant perceive her role on the board?

2.   How does the participant describe her ability to get things done on the board?

3.   Where does the participant's power come from?

4.   How does the participant's leadership style fit into her board role?

5.   How does the participant describe her relationship with the executive director?

The final area encompassed the rewards to board membership. Interview

questions will focus on the following:

1.   How has board membership affected other areas of the participant's life?

2.   How does the participant describe the relationship between professional/social status and the ability to be influential on a board?

3.   Does the participant see the nonprofit sector as an arena where women have leadership opportunities available to them?

4.   How would the participant describe the most rewarding part of her experience as a board member?

Appendix E

Board Meeting Observational Protocol

Observational data will be collected by attending two board meetings for all

current board presidents. The meetings will be audio taped and field notes will be used to

record a detailed description of what is observed in the natural setting. The following

areas will be considered as observational guidelines:

Physical Environment

How is the room set up?

What is the seating pattern?

How many board members (and officers) in attendance?

Procedural Environment

What is the content of the meeting? What are the issues?

Is the agenda followed?

How is the meeting run?

Who is in control?

Human Environment

What are the interaction patterns?

Describe the interaction between males and females.

What is the relationship between the president and the board?

What is the leadership style?

What is the decision making process?

Vita

Bridget E. Lyons was born in Portsmouth, New Hampshire and is currently a resident of Richmond, Virginia. She received her Bachelor of Arts in journalism from Saint Michael's College, Colchester, Vermont in 1983. Ms. Lyons earned a Master of Education from Virginia Commonwealth University in 1991. She worked at the University of New Hampshire and Providence College before retuning to Virginia Commonwealth University in 1996 to serve as the Director of Student-Athlete Advising. In May of 2003, Ms. Lyons was hired as an Assistant Athletic Director for the VCU Athletic Department.