

GENDER INFLUENCES ON ORGANIZATIONAL CULTURE
IN WOMEN OWNED BUSINESSES

by

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ABSTRACT

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Within an organization, there remains a core set of values and beliefs held by its people often referred to as the organizational culture. The organizational culture is tacit, deep-seated, and often remains constant in an ever-changing external environment. It is important to understand how gender influences the organizational culture within a business setting. This research study proposes to understand how women business owners influence the culture within their organizations, through management and leadership styles.

An interpretive approach will be used in this study, and interviewing will be used as the primary data collection technique. By conducting interviews with women business owners, the researcher looks to understand the dynamics, and unique distinctions found in the organizational culture in four women owned businesses in the Midwest. Any conclusions drawn from the data collected from each business can be utilized to make recommendations for maintaining or changing policies and behaviors related to organizational culture to facilitate the achievement of organizational goals.

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CHAPTER ONE – INTRODUCTION

Within an organization, there remains a core set of values and beliefs held by its people often referred to as the organizational culture. The organizational culture is tacit, deep-seated, and often remains constant in an ever-changing external environment. It is important to understand how gender influences the organizational culture within a business setting. This research study proposes to understand how women business owners influence the culture within their organizations, through management and leadership styles. This study will aid in identifying the influence of gender on the organizational culture of each business studied. With this knowledge, the participant business owners can assess and reflect on their organizational culture. The information can then be used to maintain or change policies and behaviors related to organizational culture to facilitate the achievement of organizational goals. In a larger scope, the study will support other research in the area of gender related issues, or build on the foundation for further research related to this topic.

Background of the Problem

As Northouse (2001) stated,

Over the past 20 years, researchers of women leaders and managers have built a large body of literature addressing three fundamental questions:

Can women be leaders? Do male and female leaders differ in their behavior and effectiveness in organizations? Why do so few women leaders reach the top? (p. 217)

Many variables impact aspects of our society, occupational communities, organizations, and groups within organizations (Schein, 1985). In what way does gender fit into that

scenario, particularly as it pertains to its impact on organizations, and furthermore, organizational culture? A great deal of research has yet to answer that question.

The researcher will attempt to identify if women business owners have influenced the culture in their organization in ways they intended, moreover, if they intended to. Also, the researcher will explore if the leadership style of women business owners is reflected in their businesses through their organizational culture. This is important because as Kotter and Heskett (1992) articulated, “Ideas or solutions that become embedded in a culture...often seem to be associated with a founder or early leaders.” In relation, ideas and solutions that become components of the organizational culture are frequently communicated through the management and leadership styles of the business owner, and because gender differences exist within the management and leadership styles of males and females (Hughes, Ginnett, &Curphy, 2002) , the influence of the gender differences may impact the organizational culture in different ways.

Statement of the Problem

Currently, a great deal of information exists about gender-related issues. For example, information exists about gender roles, sex stereotypes in advancing to the top of organizations referred to as the ‘glass-ceiling’ effect (Hughes et al., 2002; Manning & Curtis, 2003) and situations in which business owners consciously define their organizational culture from the very beginning through leadership qualities, traits, and styles common to their gender. Very little is known about how gender directly or indirectly influences the culture of an organization when the culture is already subconsciously in place. To ensure business success, it is imperative to understand any influences that would affect organizational culture. In other words, because the

alignment of organizational culture with the goals of the organization is extremely instrumental in the success of any organization (Kotter & Heskett, 1992), it is important to understand whether the gender of the business owner has any impact on organizational culture.

Purpose and Importance of the Study

By conducting interviews with women business owners, the researcher looks to understand the dynamics, and unique distinctions found in the organizational culture in four women owned businesses. Any conclusions drawn from the data collected from each business can be utilized to make recommendations for maintaining or changing policies and behaviors related to organizational culture to facilitate the achievement of organizational goals. The data collected will also add to the present state of knowledge, or lacking there of, regarding gender influences on organizational culture, as well as to provide a basis of knowledge on which to build in further research.

Assumptions of the Study

The following are assumptions of this study:

1. Organizational culture can be influenced by the gender of its owner.
2. The interview questions are a reliable measure of what items determine organizational culture.
3. Answers to the interview questions depict organizational culture.
4. Participants give an honest account of their organization while answering the interview questions.

Limitations of the Study

The following are limitations of the study:

1. The data is limited to interviews conducted over a one day period, which will present a snapshot of the organization rather than a longitudinal study.
2. The data is limited to interviews, and therefore, one data collection technique.
3. The data is limited to the perspective of only four women business owners.
4. The data is limited to the four industries of the four business participants.

Terms and Definitions

Leadership – There are several different definitions of leadership, however, the following definition seems to sum it up best. “The process of influencing an organized group toward accomplishing its goals” (Hughes et al., 2002, p. 8).

Management – “The art of getting things done through people...a process of planning, organizing, directing, and controlling an organization’s activities to achieve its goals” (Karsten, 1994, p. 1).

Organizational Culture – There are several varying definitions of organizational culture. The following two definitions are slightly similar, yet vary slightly, and therefore, worth noting. “A pattern of basic assumptions—invented, discovered, or developed by a given group as it learns to cope with its problems of external adaptation and internal integration—that has worked well enough to be considered valid and, therefore, to be taught to new members as the correct way to perceive, think, and feel in relation to those problems” (Schein, 1985, p. 9). “At the deeper and less visible level, culture refers to values that are shared by the people in a group and that tend to persist over time even when group membership changes. At the more visible level, culture represents the behavior patterns or

style of an organization that new employees are automatically encouraged to follow by their fellow employees” (Kotter & Heskett, 1992, p. 4).

In chapter two, the researcher will begin by defining organizational culture, as well as delineating the history. Secondly, the researcher looks at male versus female management and leadership styles. And thirdly, how and why gender differences in management and leadership styles can affect organizational culture.

In the remaining chapters, the researcher will discuss the methods and procedures used in her research, the results of her research, the summary and conclusions drawn from her research, as well as, recommendations for future research related to her study.

CHAPTER TWO – REVIEW OF LITERATURE

Organizational Culture

Organizational culture can be defined as the underlying values, attitudes, and beliefs of an organization that may be evident in the symbols and myths of an organization, as well as by the actions and behaviors of its employees (Schein, 1985). Haslett, Geis, and Carter (1992) stressed, “Do not underestimate the importance of the culture of the organization” (p. 220). Whether weak or strong, an organization’s culture has a powerful influence, affecting almost every aspect the organization. Organizational culture has a major effect on the success of a business, and a culture that aligns itself with the mission and vision of the business produces more successful business results (Deal and Kennedy, 1982). It is only recently that the characteristics of organizational culture have been systematically described and investigated (van Vianen and Fischer, 2002). Because organizational culture is so intangible and conceptual in nature, it is difficult to analyze through many common research methods. This is due in part to the difficulty of grasping this phenomenon through methodical organizational studies (Gherardi, 1994). Many researchers have attempted to understand the concept of organizational culture for a variety of reasons, for example, the notion to improve quality and customer satisfaction, increase profits and performance, or implement a strategic change effort, (Ashkanasy, Wilderom, and Peterson, 2000). Some researchers have tried to specify various relationships between gender and organizational culture in relation to many of the same issues. The fact that the interest in gender and its relationship to the culture of the organization has only recently materialized within organizational analysis does not mean that the connection is not present (Mills, 1988; Mills and Tancred, 1992). In relation to

this study, next we look at gender differences in management and leadership styles with the expectation that gender's impact on management and leadership styles, affects the culture of the organization as well.

Female versus Male; Management and Leadership styles

Many researchers feel that because of its symbolic and ambiguous nature, gender cannot be defined (Kristeva, 1981). Although some researchers conclude that gender cannot be defined, there is a great deal of information regarding the differing managerial styles of males and females. Some researchers that acknowledge differences are not out to categorize individuals, or classify any style as male or female, but rather to support and integrate many kinds of management and leadership styles to compete in the fast-paced world by using our human resources as effectively as possible (Rosener, 1990).

Most recently, The National Foundation for Women Business Owners (2003) reported that women and men business owners do, in fact, have different management styles. Women are less hierarchical, may take more time when making decisions, seek more information, and are more likely to draw upon input from others, including fellow business owners, employees and subject-matter experts.

Additionally, through interviews and completed surveys by both male and female managers to determine how they influence others, particularly the higher ups, Hughes et al. (2002) reported that female managers' show greater concern for others, consider how others felt about their influencing tactics, and were more likely than men to act with the organization's broad interest in mind. Male managers were more likely to show concern for self, act out of self-interest, show less consideration for how others might feel about his influence, work alone in developing strategies, and focus primarily on the task at hand

rather than the human condition. It is important to note that because males and females demonstrated differences, neither group was more effective than the other (Hughes et al., 2002).

When questioning men and women leaders, Rosener (1990), through a study conducted with Daniel McAllister and Gregory Stephens, indicated that women are more likely to use power based on charisma, work record, and contacts, and motivated others by transforming their self-interest into the goals of the organization; where as, men were more likely to use power based on organizational position, title, and the ability to reward and punish, and were less likely to use transformational leadership practices.

In the most recent research to determine men's and woman's stereotypes of managers, despite the increase of women managers from 21% in 1976 to 46% in 1999, Powell, Butterfield and Parent (2002) found that, "most men and women still described a good manager as possessing predominantly masculine characteristics," although the preference for masculine characteristics decreased in the scores for two of the subgroups. Possibly the change could be a result of the increased number of women in management positions, or the idea that being a good manager has more to do with good communication, coaching and people skills that are in most cases, stereotypically feminine characteristics. Nonetheless, along with these findings, the study confirmed that people feel certain characteristics are still thought to be predominantly feminine, while others, predominantly male.

Similarly, in a study conducted with 143 male and female management students to determine whether masculine traits were more associated with successful managers, Willemsen (2002) established several findings. In addition to discovering that the

participants solidified the idea that some traits are predominantly masculine and some feminine, gender-neutral traits were clearly dominant over the feminine and masculine traits, but masculine traits were still associated more often with successful managers.

Furthermore, Pierce & Newstrom (2003) found in a meta-analysis study of gender and leadership styles that although the existence of gender-stereotypes differed in a variety of settings, roles and measures, “men were more autocratic or directive than women, and women were more democratic or participative than men” (p. 112).

Through research ongoing, Meyerson and Fletcher (2000) express the following:

“Most organizations have been created by and for men and are based on male experiences. Even though women have entered the workforce in droves in the past generation, and it is generally agreed that they add enormous value, organizational definitions of competence and leadership are still predicated on traits stereotypically associated with men: tough, aggressive, decisive” (p. 126).

The researcher is not implying that a masculine or feminine leadership style or organizational culture is better. In some instances, an organization that is able to embrace both masculine and feminine characteristics and qualities are the most successful. In effect, Gherardi (1994) would emphasize that, “an organizational culture which has undertaken a civic commitment to create conditions of substantial equality is a culture able to reflect on the shifting boundaries between female and male” (p. 607).

Nonetheless, it is important to understand organizational cultures that may have been impacted by women because knowledge from a female perspective on the subject is lacking. In addition, in studies conducted in various environments, it has been suggested

that transformational leadership styles that are more often associated with women leaders are also more often associated with organizational effectiveness on many levels (Helgesen, 1990; Rosener, 1990). Now that it has been shown that males and females can vary in management and leadership styles, the following section examines the link between gender and organizational culture.

Gender Influences on Organizational Culture: The Link

Gherardi (1994) points out that gender is a social dynamic, and therefore, it is natural to assume that an organization is gendered. She states, "...it [gender] can be usefully used in the study of an organizational culture because it makes us ask how we do gender in a particular organizational setting and when we assume a particular organizational role (p. 595)." In regards to the role of business owner, and/or manager, recent research has linked gender and organizational culture by drawing attention to the masculine organizational culture as a likely explanation for the persistence of the glass ceiling phenomenon (van Vianen and Fischer, 2002). Haslett, Geis, and Carter (1992) found the following:

"Several studies have investigated female and male managers to learn if their managerial styles differ, and if so, how they may differ. Because most organizations are dominated by male cultural expectations, and men will frequently be of higher status in cross-sex conversations, it is likely that the male style will dominate and be reinforced" (p. 160).

Would the same hold true in regards to a woman's influence on organizational culture in a business she dominated?

For the most part, the gender of the business owners seems to be reflected in the organizational culture when the organizations are established with gender in mind. Women's organizations have obtained success by purposefully adopting skills and attitudes they developed from their shared experiences as women, and incorporating them into the culture of the organization through encouraging participation, sharing power and information, and energizing and enhancing the self-worth of their employees (Rosener, 1990).

Furthermore, Schor, Buskirk, & McGrath (1994) concluded in a study they conducted with a non-profit organization, the Community Women's Education Project, that in a time when skills such as organizational learning, teamwork and participative management are increasingly conceived as key to organizational survival, organizational cultures based on feminist values, such as caring, voice and self-reflection would better empower their employees to face the challenge. Organizational cultures that emphasize feminine characteristics and values seem to support the idea that the gender of the business leader (owner) and the culture of an organization are closely linked. "The actual meaning of gender in an organizational culture is created in everyday interactions which represent difference by gender and reaffirm the equality/inequity inherent to it" (p. 608). Even though The National Foundation for Women Business Owners (2003) reported that, "as of 2002, there were an estimated 6.2 million majority-owned, privately-held women-owned firms in the U.S., employing 9.2 million people and generating \$1.15 trillion in sales," little information exists about the effects of gender on organizational culture. Because of the lack of specifics on gender's influence on organizational culture in women-owned businesses, the researcher hopes to determine through an interview

process using questions pertaining to everyday interactions, whether gender has the same impact on organizational culture in businesses in which organizational cultures were created and developed without a conscious regard for the gender of the business owner.

CHAPTER THREE – METHODS AND PROCEDURES

The methods and procedures used in this case study approach are explained in this chapter under the headings of 1) method of study, 2) sample selection, 3) instrumentation, 4) procedures followed, and 5) method of analysis.

Method of Study

A qualitative and interpretive approach was used in this study. In addition to gathering background information about the participant organizations, and making subtle onsite observations, interviews were used as the primary data collection technique. This approach would be considered a narrative approach through which people describe their depictions and views of the organization, and the researcher accepts the participants' accounts as truth. This method of study was chosen because it eliminates the traditional hierarchy situation in interviewing; when the interviewer is free to answer questions and express feelings, often participants are more willing to open up as well (Denzin & Lincoln, 2000). In addition, interviewing is the best method of data collection because, "...people's self-reports of their opinions, attitudes, values or beliefs are the best source of ...desired information" (Sproull, 1995, p. 165).

By focusing on four women business owners, the researcher looked to understand the dynamics, and unique distinctions found in the organizational culture in four women owned businesses. Furthermore, the data gathered in the interview inquiry was a basis for a case study of the participant businesses. Several of the reasons why a case study method was chosen to gather data is best described by Yin (1989) when he stated, "A case study strategy is preferred when the inquirer seeks answers to how or why questions, when the inquirer has little control over events being studied...." Restated in terms of this

particular research study, the researcher's goal was to better understand how gender influences organizational culture, and because the researcher was conducting the interviews in real-life organizations, she had little control over the participants, the participants' responses, and the outcomes.

Sample Selection

The researcher obtained a 2001/2002 directory index of women/minority owned businesses from an Area Chamber of Commerce in a specific geographic location. Businesses were chosen by the following criteria: the women owner also had to be the president, and therefore, the primary manager and leader in the company. The researcher cold-called the owners of these businesses until she received verbal consent from four business owners to participate in the study. The participants were asked to complete a prewritten consent form. The consent form is shown in Appendix A.

Data Gathering: Interviews

Interviews were the primary data gathering technique. The interview questions were adapted from a research study prepared by Dr. Sheryl Johnson (1997), titled, "Reorganizing Organizations to Maximize Diversity: A Critical Feminist Approach." The material covered in the literature review was helpful in adapting Dr. Johnson's research questions to my specific area of interest, particularly in relation to women's management and leadership styles. The interview questions were used to encourage the participants to elaborate on their thoughts and experiences related to organizational culture; the business owner reflecting on herself, and her employees. The predetermined interview questions are shown in Appendix B.

Procedures Followed

First, the participants were debriefed on the interview process, after which, she was asked to complete a consent form. Again, the consent form for the owner is shown in Appendix A. On the consent form, the business owner was able to decide how much confidentiality she wished to maintain, from complete (no name or organization references) to partial (organization name but no owner's name or vice versa) or none (owner is willing to disclose both the name of her organization and her name). The confidentiality choice made by the business owner could be changed from what they initially stated on the consent form until just prior to the completed thesis, at which time they needed to make a final decision.

Secondly, the participants were asked to participate in an interview in which she was asked between seven to ten prewritten questions. The interview situation would be considered an unstructured interview environment using open-ended questions (Denzin & Lincoln, 2000); although the majority of the interview questions were predetermined before the interviews took place. During the interview, the participants were asked to clarify any answers if necessary. All verbal material gathered (interviews) was recorded and transcribed. Each participant had the right to clarify the transcripts and analyses of the interview during a period of two weeks after it was returned to them. Therefore, "...the subjects get an opportunity to comment on the interviewer's interpretations" (Kvale, 1996, p. 190). The material was kept strictly confidential until she had clarified the transcript. The participants had the option to keep the transcripts indefinitely, but no one would have access to the data except the researcher. Voice tapes were destroyed once the material was transcribed and verified by the participants.

Method of Analysis

“The analysis proper involves developing the meanings of the interviews, bringing the subjects’ own understanding into the light as well as providing new perspectives from the researcher on the phenomena” (Kvale, 1996, p. 190). Once the responses from the interviews were typed into verbatim transcripts, the data was analyzed, scrutinized, and sorted into themes related to gender influences on organizational culture. The themes used to arrange the data were owner’s expectations for employees within the organization, owner’s expectations for herself within the organization, owner’s strengths and weaknesses, and distinctive characteristics of the organization and its employees. Next, “A narrative analysis of what was said leads to a new story to be told, a story developing the themes of the original interview” (Kvale, 1996, p. 199). Lastly, conclusions and recommendations were made on the basis of the processed data transcripts and theme analysis collected from the interview process.

CHAPTER FOUR – RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Results

The participant businesses existed within a variety of industries: diamonds, educational supplements, printing needs, and dental work. All four participants were middle-aged, Caucasian women. The number of employees within the organization ranged from seven to 48 employees. At the time of the interviews, two of the businesses reported an all female staff, while one of the businesses employed a two-thirds female staff. Three out of the four businesses reported that their staff was made up of a variety of personalities, ages, and ethnic backgrounds, as well as full-time and part-time employees. In the following descriptions, some of the names have been changed to assure the confidentiality rights allowed the participants. Here are their stories.

Stories

Mary – Mary is the owner of Realityworks, formerly BTIO Educational Products, which was started in California in 1993 and moved to the Midwest several years ago. The company began by creating computerized Babies that simulated a real life infant, and were used by teachers as a learning tool outside of the classroom.

Although most people associate the company with the Baby Think It Over[®] Program, the company wanted to expand into other areas. Their new focus is helping kids feel the reality of life's decisions. Mary elaborates on this saying, “the slogan that goes with their new name is ‘live it, learn it’, and the focus is on creating products that let kids have a really deep understanding of issues or life decisions.” Some of the issues they are looking at include developing simulations for cigarette smoking and relationship choices. Mary's enthusiasm and dedication to the mission definitely impacts her

employees. She said, “They really care about what they are doing here. We have some really good quality people that could probably go other places and make more money, but they stay here because they care about what we do.”

When asked to describe their organizational culture, Mary expressed, “We try to make it very participatory.” She expands on this statement with, “We try to create an environment where every position is valued...we try to limit differences because I think on the whole, they are not conducive to everybody working together and everybody feeling like they are part of the same team.”

Elise – Elise owns Gentle Dental Care. She was a dental hygienist for seven years, before going back to dental school; after five years of hard work, she received her license to practice dentistry. She worked for a couple of dentists as an independent contractor, and decided to start her own business when she couldn’t find a position with a group of people who shared her needs. Elise believes, “...if you are the type of woman who is independent and driven, it [business owner] is a good role to have.”

The essence of her organization and its culture is a team based mentality. Elise described her staff as, “cheerful, friendly and always upbeat,” and says, “we are always helping each other out.” Elise admitted that managing an all female staff can have its challenges, but sees the benefits of it as well. She disclosed, “We don’t have the good old boy atmosphere. We’re all pretty equal...I don’t feel like I stand above them,” which she feels is important to the culture and success of the organization.

Kari – Kari is the owner of North Star Graphics. She and her sister co-own the business, and the company’s services meet the graphic design needs of a variety of customers.

Kari and her sister learned the business from the ground up, and like to give their employees the opportunity to do the same. Kari stated, "...most of the people we've trained did not know the business from the beginning. If a person really wants to work and they really have a desire to learn it well and expand on it, we'll provide the training." Furthermore, Kari stresses that it is important that every person have a clearly defined role, and that participation is an important factor in the culture of the organization. She confirmed this by saying, "I think listening is always good. We get feedback from the people doing it." Although management makes the final decisions, every person has an important part in successfully serving the customer and ensuring business success.

Denise – Denise is the owner of Williams Diamond Center. She has been working in the jewelry industry for 24 years. She began managing Williams Diamond Center in 1985, and became a business owner in 1997 when she purchased the store.

When describing her background, Denise states, "I come from a background of family owned businesses. I learned about the time, dedication and commitments a business owner endures, but also witnessed the pride and flexibility that it can allow a family." Denise is highly educated in the jewelry business, and strongly feels that educational opportunities are important to her staff and customers as well. As equally important to her is finding the right mix of employees that, "come in and have fun, have a good attitude, and who treat her customers with respect."

With her extensive knowledge and background, the right mix of employees, and a strong belief in God, Denise stresses, "I always believe and have faith." It is clear that her beliefs and attitude have had an impact on the organization creating a culture based on dedication and trust.

Themes

Self Reflection – A vital observation is that the owner’s really appeared to know themselves well. Mary from Reality Works expressed, “I think one of my strengths is that I do a lot of soul searching and self examination.” Knowing their own strengths and weaknesses so well influences their employees, and the overall way they do business. One participant communicated that through self analysis, she has a clearly defined role in the organization, which she feels is important to business success. Denise from Williams Diamond Center understands her strengths and weaknesses, and therefore, knows her customers and how to best serve them. Because of this, she said, “I always believe and have faith that things will work out, and things always have worked out.” This attitude appeared to have a positive impact on her employees and her successful organization. Another participant communicated that self reflection helped her to realize owning a business was right for her. “Through self analysis and a well-prepared business plan,” she emphasized, “I really create my own destiny.” It is important to be aware of your strengths and weaknesses, and learn from experiences by reflecting on them (Kurplantzick, 2003). Self-awareness has been stressed in leadership development programs, and it appears that these women have found the value in it as well.

The Nice Guy – Is being nice a strength or a weakness? Mary stated, “...we [women] have a tendency to be too nice, and it confuses issues for other people in the company because they see that there are different standards for different people...and that’s very demoralizing.” Denise seemed to agree, saying, “My overall weakness is that I want to please everybody...I try to be the nice guy...and sometimes, that is not the best business decision.” Helgesen (1990) stated that women managers see people “popping

in” as a normal flow of business because they want their employees to know that somebody cares. Kari confirmed this by reporting, “we [business owners] are around...we are very approachable...we have people in and out of our offices all day long.” In addition, another participant articulated that it is also difficult for her to find a balance between being “the nice guy,” and upholding a respectful relationship with her employees to get the job done. She maintains, “...we’re still friends, but you do still need to be the boss and you have to be able to stand your ground.” “Women’s concern with relationships gives them many advantages as managers” (Helgesen, 1990, p. 20). In the end, Denise agreed by articulating, “I would rather take the risk, being close or being hurt than pull back because I think there are much greater benefits in having those friendships.”

Participative Management – All of the women businesses owners believed that the most important component to a successful and smooth running business is a participative environment. This finding supported other research and Northouse (2001) when he stated, “Women used a more participative or democratic style [of leadership] than men did” (p. 221). Mary expressed this belief by saying, “We are trying to create a climate where people can say things that might not always be positively received or welcomed in all organizations.” The women owners embraced the participative management style by openly sharing organizational information with their employees, and bringing them into the decision-making process by incorporating regular meetings. Denise at Williams Diamond Center believed that in doing so, she built a deeper level of trust with her employees, stating, “They all know that I am open to listen and talk about anything.” The office arrangements reinforced this finding. . From the smaller to the

larger organizations, the owner's office was centrally located, and easily accessible to all staff members. Additionally, the majority of the business owners felt that education was an essential part of a participative organization culture. While encouraging participation, the owner of Gentle Dental Care said, "You know I want them to do as much as they can, and it [training] makes their job more interesting...we do a lot of continuing education." Mary Jurmain "educates employees about the finances of the company," while another business owner who trains willing employees, expressed, "I believe people need to expand their own responsibility and grow...they don't have to, but they truly can make their own decisions." A participative management style that produces knowledgeable, involved employees and an empowered organization has been seen as the wave of the future. It appears that the participants have an edge on the future.

The Big Picture – When researching women managers, Helgesen (1990) reported, "Although the open-ended nature of their jobs certainly demanded long hours, none permitted this to mean the sacrifice of important family time" (p. 22). Family-oriented values are definitely part of the organizational culture of the participant businesses. When asked about her organization, Denise said, "...my employees...they have families, and their lives, and their priorities...all of us are very family-oriented." Similarly, one business owner similarly stated, "they [employees] have families, they don't want to be gone nights, they don't want to be gone weekends...there are a lot of jobs where one doesn't have that option." The participant from Gentle Dental Care emphasized that looking at the big picture by not only thinking about how an organizational issue or decision will affect her as the owner, but how will it affect her employees. She went even further to say, "...you know if I went home and had a wife who was taking care of

the kids it would be different. Because we are all women and moms, we choose not to work evenings, and we don't have to work weekends." The women business owners seemed to understand that life is a balance; making time for home and family leads to happier employees. Mary seemed to sum it up best by highlighting, "People have families. I believe people need to spend time with their families and they'll probably be better employees in the long run if we don't overwork them." I'm sure a sentiment that is much appreciated by her employees.

Discussion

The business owners that participated were passionate and articulate individuals who led flourishing and successful businesses. Some definite commonalities appeared in the responses of the participants; they described warm, caring environments, and a culture that embraced self-reflection, educational opportunities, close relationships, and family values. Their views concurred with the past and current research findings that women naturally exhibit participative management styles.

CHAPTER FIVE – SUMMARY, CONCLUSIONS, AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Summary, conclusions and recommendations are discussed in this chapter under the specified headings. The summary section is broken into further segments: restatement of the problem, methods and procedures, and major findings. The conclusions are based on the findings related to the sample population. The recommendations are based on the findings and conclusions related to this study, as well as recommendations for further studies.

Summary

Restatement of the Problem – There are differences in male and female leadership styles. Gender influences leadership and management style, but how does gender impact the culture of an organization. To ensure business success, it is important to understand any influences that would affect organizational culture. The researcher set out to determine whether gender has an impact on organizational culture in four women owned businesses by looking for unique distinctions in their organizational culture.

Methods and Procedures - By focusing on four women business owners, the researcher looked to understand the dynamics and unique distinctions found in the organizational culture in four women owned businesses. Interviews were used as the primary data collection technique. The interview data was analyzed and sorted by themes related to gender influences on organizational culture. Conclusions and recommendations were made.

Major Findings – The business owners were passionate and articulate individuals who led flourishing and successful businesses. The businesses that participated in the

study supported warm, caring environments, and a culture that embraced self-reflection, educational opportunities, close relationships and family values. Those commonalities support past and current research that women tend to embrace participative work environments, as well as the notion that the gender of the business owner does have some impact on the culture of the organization.

Conclusions

It has been shown that gender influences leadership styles, and leadership styles impact the culture of the organization. Although further research on the impact of gender on organizational culture is still warranted, the researcher's findings does support the belief that women business owners have an impact on the organizational culture of their businesses through caring and participatory management styles. Armed with this information, the participant business owners have the opportunity to increase their awareness of self and their role as leader and manager of the organization, and in turn an awareness of their impact on the culture of the organization.

With that said, gender differences in leadership styles and organizational culture may be evident and recognizable, but does it explain the differences between successful and unsuccessful leaders, or successful and unsuccessful organizations. Ideally, it seems as though researchers want to define and enhance the leadership skills and culture that work toward organizational success, not gender-categorized, but a combination that is successful for male or female. In addition, it is important to recognize that the successful combination might vary by the type of the organization, as well as the situation. As leaders become more challenged by flat organizations, changing technology, and

increased competition, the advantageous solution is to develop organizational cultures, traditionally known as female or male, that seem to thrive in those kinds of environments.

Recommendations

Related to this study – This study may have produced more valuable findings if interviews were conducted with other data gathering techniques, such as, focus groups, observations, and analysis of organizational documents. In addition, a quantitative measure such as the Organizational Culture Inventory (OCI; Cooke and Lafferty, 1987) could have been used to more deeply analyze the organizational cultures of each business. The researcher believes that an analysis of data from the business owners and staff members as well would have yielded a more well-rounded view of each organization. After all, organizational culture can be difficult to distinguish by just talking to one person within the organization. Similarly, finding themes in gender influences on organizational culture may have been more distinguishable by comparing interview data from more than four businesses. Therefore, a gathering and analysis of data from a greater number of businesses may be necessary and beneficial.

Related to further studies – In general, studies on organizational culture are lacking due to the difficulty of studying this type of phenomenon. It would seem that gender would have an influence on an organization's culture, but how exactly has yet to be determined, and should be further researched. In addition, there is an alternative way to view gender-related issues within an organization. As previously stated, it may be more beneficial to study organizational cultures that promote business success, and disregard gender categories in regard to leadership traits and behaviors. I believe Paris (2002) may have summed it up best by stating the following:

“Instead of shaping the debate around biology we must recognize that it is about skill sets. Just as women in the 1980’s appropriated masculine leadership attributes, it is now important for men to incorporate these typically female skills into the toolkit. This assimilation will lead towards the breakdown of gender-defined attributes and help us to recognize that having a spectrum of the diverse qualities mentioned above—gender tags removed—created a dexterous, rounded and complete leader” (p. 25).

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APPENDIX A

CONSENT FORM (Owner)

You are invited to participate voluntarily in a study of how women business owners affect the culture within their organizations, which is being conducted by Ronda Brown as part of her M.S. research at the University of Wisconsin-Stout.

Your participation will involve one interview discussing how you organize your business and your perceptions of the research process. If applicable, the researcher will also be conducting one interview with two members of your staff: one person who reports directly to you, and one worker.

Any verbal material gathered (interviews) will be recorded and transcribed. You will have the right to clarify the transcripts and analyses of the interview during a period of one month after it is returned. The material will be kept strictly confidential until you have clarified the transcript.

The transcripts may be kept indefinitely, but no one will have access to the data except the principal investigator. Voice tapes will be destroyed once material is transcribed and verified by participants.

You can decide how much confidentiality you wish to maintain, from complete (no name or organization references) to partial (organization name but no owner's name or vice versa) or none (you are willing to disclose both the name of your organization and your name), and this can be changed from what you initially put on this document until just prior to the completed thesis, at which time you must make a final decision.

The researcher may authorize publication of quotations from the transcripts in appropriate cases.

Any questions you have about the project will be answered by the interviewer to the best of her ability. You understand that you are free not to answer any questions at any time.

Your decision whether or not to participate will not affect your current or future relations with the University of Wisconsin-Stout. If you decide to participate, you are free to withdraw at any time without affecting that relationship.

Questions or concerns about participation in the research or subsequent complaints should be addressed to Ronda Brown (researcher), 715-556-2501 or Dr. Sheryl Johnson (Research Advisor), 715-232-2376 or to Sue Foxwell, Human Protections Administrator, UW-Stout Institutional Review Board for the Protection of Human Subjects in Research, 11 Harvey Hall, UW-Stout, Menomonie, WI 54751, phone (715) 232-2477.

You have read the above agreement. You understand what is being asked of you and you are willing to participate in this project and to have the materials used in the ways described above.

CONFIDENTIALITY DESIRED:

I want complete confidentiality for myself, and my organization.

Participant's Signature

I want to have partial confidentiality as specified here:

Participant's Signature

I want to name recognition for myself, and my organization.

Participant's Signature

Interviewer's Signature

Date

APPENDIX B

BRIEFING: I am conducting a study in which I hope to gain some insight on whether gender has an affect on organizational culture. I will be asking you approximately nine interview questions, and I will be taping your response to those questions. Please talk clearly and openly throughout your response. You may be asked to clarify your answer. Do you have any questions before we begin?

INTERVIEW QUESTIONS: (Owner)

1. Describe what you have done in your organization to maximize the participation and contributions of all employees?
2. Organizational culture has been defined as a system of shared backgrounds, norms, values, or beliefs among members of a group (Schein, 1985). Another way to understand an organization's culture is in terms of myths and stories, symbols, rituals, and language (Schein, 1985). Describe your organization's culture. Do you feel the organizational culture is unique because of your gender?
3. What internal organizational issues have you encountered and changed that have helped your company's effectiveness in listening to all employees, giving everyone equal opportunity to participate and contribute?
4. What internal organizational issues have you encountered that have hindered your company's effectiveness in listening to all employees, giving everyone equal opportunity to participate and contribute?
5. What other changes have you considered making but have not implemented as yet that you feel your organization can benefit from?

6. What personal issues have you encountered that have helped and hindered your effectiveness as owner, and how have you dealt with these?
7. Where do you feel your strengths and weaknesses are in assessing these organizational issues?
8. What unique qualities do your employees bring to the organization? What unique qualities do you bring to the organization?

DEBRIEFING: I have no further questions? Do you have anything more you want to bring up, or ask about, before we finish the interview?